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Libya agrees to Lockerbie trial

CAIRO (AFP) — Libya has agreed to hand over the two suspects in the 1988 bombing of a U.S. airliner over Lockerbie, Scotland, for trial by a panel chaired by a judge named by British Prime Minister Tony Blair, the spokesman for the families of the British victims said Wednesday. Libyan President Muammar Qadhafi gave his personal agreement that the suspects could be tried by a panel of five judges chaired by a senior Scottish judge appointed by Mr. Blair, Jim Swire told AFP here on his return from a visit to Libya. "We also suggested that the other four judges be nominated by U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan," said Mr. Swire, who lost his daughter in the 1988 bombing in which 270 people were killed. But Libyan officials said they would "have to think about such a suggestion," he said.

Crown Prince, Gorbachev meet

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, in the presence of Her Royal Highness Princess Sarvath, on Wednesday received former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev. The Crown Prince and Mr. Gorbachev discussed means of activating scientific cooperation between Jordanian scientific institutions and the Gorbachev Foundation.

Arab states sign first ever anti-terrorism agreement

'Liberation, self-determination do not amount to terrorism'

CAIRO (AP) — Arab countries on Wednesday signed the first regional pact on fighting terrorism, but made it clear that activists who target Israel will not be considered terrorists.

The pact calls on Arab countries to deny refuge, training and financial or military support to groups that launch attacks on other Arab nations. They will also exchange information on terrorist groups.

Member nations "should not allow their lands to be used as theatres for plotting or the execution and organisation of terrorist crimes," the treaty says.

It was signed by interior or justice ministers of the 22 countries in the Arab League, which sponsored the pact. An official statement said the pact will help the Arab World "direct its energies" toward economic development.

"The agreement [will] save the evil attempts to defame the image of the Arabs and Islam... We will not allow [terrorism] to impose its treachery and oppression," Egypt's Interior Minister Habib Al Adly said.

"Terrorism completely violates Islam, which holds in great regard the human life while terrorism treats it cheaply," said Saudi Arabia's Interior Minister Nayef Bin Abdul Aziz.

In accepting a Lebanese proposal, the pact exempts resistance movements from its definition, saying activist acts aimed at "liberation and self-determination" do not amount to terrorism.

That clause is intended to justify attacks on Israel by Palestinians, and by Lebanese guerrilla groups fighting to oust Israeli soldiers from a swath of land they occupy in southern Lebanon.

A report released earlier this week by a committee of ministers that worked on the pact called Israel a state "established on terrorism," a reference to claims that Israel was founded on stolen Arab land.

The signing ceremony for the pact took place at the Arab League building, which was ringed by armed policemen. Security men also blocked small streets nearby and were perched on the roof. Everyone inside, including journalists and delegates, was escorted by plainclothesmen.

The strict security was a reminder that the threat of terrorism remains as real in Egypt as in some other Arab countries, such as Algeria.

Both countries, which have battled Islamist movements for years, had lobbied for the pan-Arab anti-terrorist agreement for the past two years.

While guerrilla massacres in Algeria are well known, the world was reminded of Egypt's plight when suspected Islamist guerrillas gunned down 58 foreigners and two Egyptians on Nov. 17 outside the tourist town of Luxor. Islamist groups have been fighting since 1992 to oust Egypt's secular government.

The treaty says any attacks on ruling regimes in the Arab World or the families of the rulers should be treated as terrorist and not political acts. This clause is apparently aimed at preventing attackers from escaping extradition or prosecution by claiming they were politically motivated.

The agreement outlines plans for cooperation in the investigation and arrest of suspected extremists and establishes guidelines for their extradition.

It was not clear what the treaty says about countries that violate it.

"I believe that the agreement... has dealt with clearly the differentiation between terrorist and political crimes and armed struggle," Mr. Adly said.

Arab League General Secretary Esmet Abdul Meguid said the agreement will help increase Arab cooperation with Western governments.



Members of the Arab League attend the signing ceremony of the first Arab convention against terrorism on Wednesday in Cairo. The Egyptian inspired treaty, which took four years to bring about bars act of terrorism against the convention's signatories (AFP photo)

Prince Hassan renews call for Islamic-Christian dialogue

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan underlined Wednesday the importance of Islamic-Christian dialogue in the course of portraying the bright image of the Islamic faith to the world and to project Islam's stand with regard to the different humanitarian issues and thwart attempts by some people to distort the image of Islam.

Speaking at a lunch banquet he hosted at the Royal Court in honour of members of the Higher Islamic Council for Da'w'a and Relief, Prince Hassan said that through dialogue one can attain cooperation among different nations in political, cultural and economic fields.

He told the council members who met in Amman at the invitation of the Royal Academy for Islamic Civilisation Research (Al al Bayt Foundation) that it was important for Islamic institutions to coordinate their efforts in promoting dialogue and achieving their objectives.

He reminded his audience of Islam's view of dialogue as a means for persuasion, stressing the importance of the Islamic World to contribute to the creation of a new humanitarian order that can ensure security and a decent life for all people.

The required dialogue among religions, he said, "is one in which we do not lose our identity and one that leads to openness towards world societies and so we can be of benefit to others as they will be of benefit to us."

"In fact, we have to take the initiative in asking for dialogue because we do not fear a dialogue and we have full confidence in our stance and our capabilities," added Prince Hassan.

Prince Hassan went on to say that dialogue was needed as a tool to help protect Islamic minorities in Western societies with whom he said the Islamic World should maintain contact.

He expressed hope that closer cooperation between Islamic and Christian institutions would help people confront many challenges.

The Crown Prince recalled that in the Tehran Islamic summit conference he had called for the establishment of an Islamic centre to settle disputes and in this respect he also renewed his call for the creation of an international Zakat fund which would help solve many humanitarian issues facing the Islamic nations.

Following the meeting Dr. Abdul Aziz Twejiri, director general of the Islamic Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (ISESCO), told Jordan Television that the meeting aimed at co-ordination in the Islamic-Christian dialogue and uniting the stands of the different Islamic institutions taking part in such dialogue.

The council comprises twelve members of whom two are from Jordan. They are Dr. Abdul Salam Abbadi, minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, and Mr. Kamel Sharif, secretary general of the World Islamic Council for Da'w'a and Relief.

Egyptian-Palestinian talks focus on stalled Mideast negotiations

CAIRO (AP) — Palestinian President Yasser Arafat met with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak on Wednesday and discussed the U.S efforts to nudge forward stalled Middle East peace negotiations.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa outlined the talks to reporters after the session and said the two leaders agreed to meet again following May 4 negotiations in London between Israel and the Palestinians.

Mr. Musa said Mr. Arafat was going to the London meeting in agreement with an American plan for Israel to withdraw from a further 13.1 per cent of the West Bank over 12 weeks in exchange for new Palestinian security guarantees.

"The Palestinian side has accepted the American initiative... but the problem lies with the Israeli government," Mr. Moussa said.

Mr. Mubarak and Mr. Netanyahu are also expected to meet next Tuesday in Cairo, and Mr. Musa said those discussions would focus on "what is going in the Middle East peace and the dangers that threaten its collapse." Mr. Mubarak, who has long tried to mediate between the Israelis and Palestinians, has repeatedly warned the entire peace process could fall apart unless Israel is willing to compromise.

Netanyahu ministers hold new debate on troop pullback

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu's security cabinet held a new debate Wednesday over how much additional West Bank land Israel would be willing to cede to revive U.S.-brokered peace talks with the Palestinians, officials said.

After the meeting, Mr. Netanyahu held talks on the pullback with his "kitchen" cabinet including Israeli Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai, National Infrastructure Minister Ariel Sharon and Industry and Trade Minister Natan Sharansky.

Mr. Netanyahu is reportedly trying to convince ministers to accept a slight increase in Israel's offer for the long-overdue troop withdrawal ahead of top-level talks among U.S., Israeli and Palestinian officials in London on May 4.

U.S. special envoy Dennis Ross and Assistant Secretary of State Martin Indyk are due in Israel Saturday to try to obtain Israeli and Palestinian agreement on a package peace deal to be finalised in London.

The U.S. proposal is reportedly centred on a staged Israeli withdrawal from an additional 13 per cent of the West Bank in tandem with Palestinian measures against anti-Israeli activists.

The U.S. plan would have the two sides then enter into negotiations on a final peace agreement.

Mr. Netanyahu's right-wing coalition government has so far offered to cede only nine per cent of the West Bank at this time. But Israeli press reports said he is trying to convince hard-liners to increase this to 11 per cent.

The Palestinian National Authority says that interim peace accords require Israel to withdraw from 30 per cent of the West Bank now and another 30 per cent in mid-year. The Palestinians currently have full or partial control of 27 per cent of the territory and most of the Gaza Strip.

But Palestinian President Yasser Arafat said Monday that he accepted the U.S. compromise proposal in principle and called on Mr. Ross to make the U.S. ideas public during his next mission.

New impetus has been injected into the peace effort since British Prime Minister Tony Blair met with Mr. Netanyahu and Mr. Arafat early this week and obtained their agreement to the London talks.

The current plan is for Mr. Netanyahu and Mr. Arafat to meet separately with U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and Mr. Blair in the British capital.

If the two sides can agree on the U.S. peace proposals, a Netanyahu-Arafat summit could be held, although all sides have been playing down expectations of a major breakthrough after more than a year of stalemate in the negotiations.

As part of a flurry of diplomatic activity surrounding the latest U.S. peace push, Mr. Netanyahu's office announced late Tuesday that he would meet Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak Tuesday in Cairo.

It will be their first encounter in a year and follows sharp Egyptian criticism of Mr. Netanyahu's hard-line stance in negotiations with the Palestinians.

Also next week U.S. Vice President Al Gore is scheduled to visit Israel for celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the Jewish state on April 30.

Israeli press reports say Mr. Gore will meet with both Mr. Netanyahu and Mr. Arafat to press for agreement on the U.S. peace package ahead of

PNA warns of explosion

GAZA CITY (AFP) — The Palestinians called on the United States Wednesday to pressure Israel to accept U.S. proposals during upcoming talks in London, warning that the zero hour in the peace process was approaching. "The situation is very dangerous right now. We are close to the last 15 minutes before either the situation explodes or the picture becomes clear," said Nabil Abu Rudeina, a top aide to Palestinian President Yasser Arafat. "We demand the United States put pressure on Israel to accept the American proposals" over a promised Israeli troop withdrawal from the West Bank, Mr. Abu Rudeina told AFP. Mr. Netanyahu, who has resisted the U.S. ideas, played down hopes for the London talks on Tuesday, cautioning against "raising expectations too high." He said the talks would address "core issues" remaining from 1995 interim accords, presumably including the troop withdrawals which are the main outstanding issue.

Israeli army arrests 11 in Yatta

YATTA (AFP) — Israeli soldiers detained 11 Palestinians and searched more than 30 homes in a sweep here overnight after a Jewish settler was shot dead in an argument with residents, witnesses said Wednesday.

A large force of Israeli army jeeps entered the West Bank town of Yatta, south of Hebron, and searched more than 30 homes, questioning their residents, witnesses said.

Israeli police sources said 11 residents were arrested on suspicion of involvement in the argument which broke out on Sunday between residents and Israelis from the nearby settlement of Moan.

Soldiers had raided the village immediately after the incident on Sunday, arresting nine people, including one man wearing blood-stained clothes.

The argument broke out when a group of Yatta residents tried to enter Arab land which Maon settlers had seized to build a road and put up residential caravans.

During the scuffling, a Jewish settler, Dov Driban, was shot dead when Palestinians wrestled a pistol away from him, and a Palestinian was severely injured by another settler who opened fire with an M16 automatic rifle, the Israeli army said.

But the injured Palestinian told Palestinian police that it was the second settler who accidentally killed Driban when he opened fire with his M16, Hebron police chief Tareq Zaid told journalists on Wednesday.

Mr. Zaid said Palestinian police had requested Israel give them a copy of the coroners report on Driban.

Israeli police sources said the bullet which killed Driban came from a pistol not an M16, although tests had not yet been done to confirm it came from the pistol grabbed by the Palestinians.

Mussa Abu Sabha, a Hebron delegate to the Palestinian Legislative Council, blamed Israel for the shooting, saying it allows Jewish settlers to seize land and prevent its Arab owners from working on it.

"How can they let settlers do what they want and stop Palestinian from farming their own land," he told journalists.

Anguish versus optimism: The Kingdom's privatisation process sparks a nationwide debate

By Ghadeer Taher
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Mohammad Suleiman has been waiting for a telephone line for nearly 10 years. Today, he is optimistic he will finally get one as the Jordan Telecommunications Corporation (JTC) awaits privatisation. He understands little about privatisation, but he has been told it will be good for him and the country.

But not everyone shares his optimism about the future.

For Ahmad, a mid-management employee at the JTC, angst characterises his days. In a few months, the government-owned JTC will sell 40 per cent of its shares to a foreign strategic partner and he worries about losing his job as the company adopts new profit-oriented policies.

Both men reflect the essence of an ongoing nationwide debate about the perceived benefits and disadvantages of the government's controversial and much-delayed privatisation programme.

Officials, who say the country is still committed to a privatisation course which began in earnest only three years ago, are on the defensive as accusations of corruption, influence peddling and risking foreign domination of the economy increase.

Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali's government has come under unprecedented criticism from the Lower House of Parliament for promising to speed up privatisation, a key element in economic reforms launched by the International Monetary Fund in 1989.

Detractors also cite potential massive job layoffs and higher prices for services as newly-privatised companies strive to become lean and mean to increase profits.

The government, backed by numerous examples from other countries charting the same course, has sound arguments to counter such claims. But officials agree that this government, like previous ones, has failed to adequately explain to the public why and how it intends to privatise state-owned enterprises.

"No government in the world can tackle the problems of poverty, health and education and still have enough resources to invest in rapidly advancing telecommunications technology, railroads, and other industries," a senior government official told the Jordan Times.

"We will give leading qualified firms and investors the opportunity to own and operate major economic activities within a regulatory framework that will limit the government role to that of an overseer."

The government said it was considering a proposal by parliament's key financial and economic committee to establish a state fund to receive the multi-million dollar proceeds of the sell-offs to be used for infrastructure and social development projects. The committee opposed using the money to meet expenditure needs.

Officials involved in the privatisation effort say the sell-off would generate employment by attracting much needed foreign direct investment (FDI), raising the economy's competitiveness and helping bolster state finances by ending subsidies to loss-making enterprises.

Jordan is planning to privatise the Aqaba Railway Corporation, the Public Transport Company as well as two of the three main activities of National Electricity and Power Company (NEPCO) after the passage of 1996 Electricity Law opened the door for private investment in power generation. Requests for proposals will be sent to eleven qualified international firms early this summer for the building and operation of a 275-350 MW plant. On Tuesday, the government signed a deal with leading French Hotel Chain, ACCOR, allowing it to invest and operate the debt-riddled Ma'in Spa Hotel on

(Continued on page 12)

Company	Current Status	Future	Time
Aqaba Railway	government-owned	Concession to be given to private operator	12 months
Public Transport	government-owned	Private companies within regulatory framework	12 months
NEPCO	government-owned	Power generation and distribution to be privatised	18 months
Jordan Telecom	government-owned	JTC with financial advisor Meryll Lynch will sell 40% stake	18 months
RJ	government-owned	Create debt-free subsidiary for evennual sale to private sector Invited international financial and legal advisors to submit bids	8 months
Jordan Cement Factories	49.5% government owned	Chose EFG Hermes to act as financial advisor on the sale of 33% of government share	8 months
Ma'in Spa	government-owned	Negotiating with French ACOR on a 20 year lease	2 months
Water Authority	government-owned	Water management contract for Greater Amman distribution system will be given to foreign firm	June 98

U.S. favours keeping sanctions on Iraq

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The United States will fight "very hard" to maintain sanctions against Iraq during a U.N. Security Council debate next week, U.S. Ambassador Bill Richardson said Wednesday.

The U.S. decision comes despite "progress" made by U.N. arms inspectors in getting access to suspected Iraqi weapons sites, he said.

"It's a mixed bag," Mr. Richardson said on NBC television.

Mr. Richardson predicted the United States will face "an intense battle, because Iraq has a concerted [public relations] campaign, and they have friends in the Security Council."

The Security Council is set to decide April 27 whether to lift U.N. sanctions clamped on Baghdad for nearly eight years.

Washington insists that Baghdad must prove it has destroyed all its weapons of mass destruction before sanctions can be removed.

On Feb. 23, Iraq signed an accord with the U.N. opening contested "presidential sites" to U.N. disarmament experts accompanied by international diplomats.

But in his latest report to the Security Council, Richard Butler, the head of the U.N. Special Commission on Iraqi disarmament, said there had been "virtually no progress" in eliminating Iraqi weapons of mass destruction in the last six months.

"On the issue of access to presidential sites, there is progress. The Iraqis did allow access," Mr. Richardson said. "They, however, have said they will not allow for repeat inspections. That's a problem, because we want unfettered, unlimited access."

Mr. Richardson also said there were "other problems" concerning Iraq's concealment of weapons of mass destruction including anthrax, VX, and ballistic missiles.

'Wall of suspicion' still divides Iran from U.S. — minister

TEHRAN (AFP) — A "wall of suspicion" still divides Iran and the United States, Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharazi said Wednesday in an attack on Washington's decision to extend its Persian-language radio broadcasts to Iran.

"The wall of suspicion still exists between Iran and the United States and this American decision is a flagrant interference in our domestic affairs," Mr. Kharazi told Iranian radio.

"Our people will not allow themselves to be influenced by this sort of psychological campaign," he said.

The U.S. State Department announced last Wednesday that it planned to boost its Persian-language broadcasts to Iran but denied the move was intended to destabilise the government of Iranian President Mohammad Khatami.

"The purpose of these broadcasts is not to beam anti-government propaganda into Iran," U.S. State Department spokesman James Rubin said.

"Rather, this new service would provide more detailed factual reporting on political, social and foreign policy issues affecting Iran."

The Iranian foreign ministry condemned the move Sunday saying it "shows more and more the contradiction between the words and the actions of American leaders towards Iran."

The controversial proposal advocated by the U.S. Congress comes at an awkward time for the U.S. government, which is seeking to open up a dialogue with Iran that could end nearly two decades of enmity.

Somali gunmen decline ransom for aid workers

MOGADISHU (AFP) — Gunmen holding 10 aid workers hostage in north Mogadishu declined a $32,000 ransom offered by Somali businessmen, saying it was too little, a local paper reported Wednesday.

The Bandair newspaper said the businessmen offered the money to the kidnappers to compensate them for expenses they had incurred since the abduction of nine foreigners and one Somali on April 15.

The kidnappers have reportedly been spending extravagantly in anticipation of receiving a million-dollar ransom they have demanded for the release of workers for the Red Cross and Red Crescent organisations.

They have been buying food and cigarettes on credit from a small shop in Karan district of north Mogadishu, promising to pay when they receive the ransom, a businessman said.

"An average gunman smokes more than two packets of Kenyan-made Sportsman cigarettes a day and they have been chewing increasing amounts of khat since last Wednesday," the businessman, who asked not to be named, told reporters.

Khat is a mild leafy narcotic chewed by Somalis and people in the Gulf.

A militia source told AFP that the $32,000 offer had divided the kidnappers, with some of them willing to accept the money and others sticking to a previous demand for $100,000 for each hostage.

In Nairobi, meanwhile, the executive director of the U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF), Carol Bellamy, on Wednesday described the kidnapping as a "serious affront to humanitarian action."

"The incident underlines the continuing difficulties faced by all humanitarian organisations — we are increasingly being targeted directly in areas where conflict, hostilities and insecurity are present," Ms. Bellamy told a news conference at the end of a five-day visit to east Africa.

Sudan threatens to end relief deliveries

KHARTOUM (AFP) — Sudan has threatened to withdraw permission for the delivery of international relief to war-affected areas in the south if the rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) continues with practices Khartoum alleges are obstructing relief operations.

Sudanese Foreign Minister Mustafa Osman Ismail told a press conference Tuesday that his government had warned on issuing the permission early this month that it would only be temporary if the SPLA attempted to utilise it for its own ends.

"The government will order a halt to those relief operations if the rebel movement continues practices obstructive to the relief efforts," Mr. Ismail told the news conference, to which he invited foreign ambassadors and other diplomats in Khartoum.

He cited as an example an attack he said the SPLA launched on the Arab Rizaiqat tribe in southern Darfur on April 14 in which he said 42 people were killed and 11 others wounded and 5,000 head of cattle were looted.

Mr. Ismail said this kind of act would hinder the passage of relief from north to south Sudan, noting that although three weeks had passed since relief deliveries were allowed international organisations were still saying that parts of south Sudan were hit by famine.

"We thought that our commitment to opening corridors for relief, our willingness for a ceasefire and our endeavours to dissuade the border tribes from taking revenge would be acclaimed worldwide," Mr. Ismail said, referring to communities on the border between the largely Arab and Muslim north and the Christian and animist south.

Algeria urged to admit envoys investigating torture

GENEVA (AFP) — The United States and the European Union upbraided Algeria on Wednesday for failing to admit U.N. envoys investigating allegations of summary executions and torture during the six-year Islamist insurgency.

British Ambassador Audrey Glover said the EU regretted that Algeria had given no firm commitment or dates for fact-finding visits by special rapporteurs working for the U.N. human rights commission.

"We cannot therefore remain silent when a United Nations member state.... repeatedly refuses to cooperate with the special procedures of the commission," she said.

Algiers "needs to make substantive progress on this very soon if the concerns of the international community are to be allayed and the very serious allegations of grave human rights violations are to be dealt with," she said.

Ambassador Nancy Rubin, the head of the U.S. delegation to the human rights commission, said Washington noted with "great regret" that the Algerian government had refused to take such a step toward cooperation.

"The situation in Algeria is a tragedy that concerns us all," Ms. Rubin said.

"Acts of terrorism there have targeted innocent civilians — men, women and children — killing and maiming 75,000 people since 1992 when the violence began," she said.

"Two thousand of these have occurred in the last four months alone. Others have fallen victim to systematic rape and kidnapping," Ms. Rubin said.

Ms. Rubin said Washington believed "the terrorist Armed Islamic Group is clearly responsible for most of this shocking slaughter," but still wanted to determine responsibility in some cases of violence.



Thousands of Turkish Islamists Wednesday gather outside Istanbul city hall to protest a court sentence against Istanbul Mayor Tayyip Erdogan, who was convicted of inciting hatred in a speech. Demonstrators blocked traffic as Mr. Erdogan spoke at a rowdy news conference in his office (Reuters photo)

Turkish Islamists rally in show of strength against crackdown

ISTANBUL (AFP) — Some ten thousand people took to the streets of Istanbul Wednesday to protest the sentencing of the city's Islamist mayor, in the Islamist movement's first show of strength since the beginning of a crackdown in Turkey.

"Mosques are our barracks, the minarets our bayonets, the domes our helmets and the believers our soldiers," the crowd chanted, repeating the statement for which Mayor Recep Tayyip Erdogan was sentenced to 10 months in jail on Tuesday.

"The shadow of politics has fallen on the judiciary," Mr. Erdogan told the rally, calling for freedom of thought and speech in Turkey.

"I respect our courts, but I cannot respect their erroneous decisions," he added. "What matters to me, is the decision you have taken [to elect me]."

Traffic was blocked by the demonstrators, who carried posters protesting the ruling and in support of the mayor.

"We appeal to the independence of the courts," Abdullatif Sener, former Turkish Finance Minister and delegate of the new Islamist Virtue Party, said in a speech before the crowd.

Mr. Sener called on Turkish Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz to "fight together for democracy" and expressed confidence that the Turkish court of appeals would quash the conviction.

A Turkish state security court in south-eastern Diyarbakir on Tuesday found Mr. Erdogan guilty of incitement to religious hatred and sentenced him to 10 months in jail, although he remains free pending appeal.

Mr. Erdogan, who has won plaudits for his job running the historic metropolis, insisted during his trial that his words had been misconstrued and he had not intended to make "any provocation whatsoever."

If his appeal fails and the sentence is upheld, Mr. Erdogan will be forced to step down as mayor and will lose the right to stand for election.

The rally in Istanbul was the first of its kind since a crackdown in recent months against the Islamists.

There had been no demonstrations of this size since the banning of the Islamist Welfare Party by the Turkish constitutional court in January or following the announcement in March of a series of government measures aimed at weakening the Islamists.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Iranian parliament adopts law on 'Islamic care'

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran's parliament adopted legislation Wednesday which seeks to apply Islamic precepts to medical care and would allow only female hospital employees to provide treatment to women. The law on "Islamic medical care" was adopted by a large majority in the conservative-dominated parliament, the Majlis, despite the opposition of the government of Iranian President Mohammad Khatami, parliamentary sources said.

Yassin to visit Syria as part of Arab, Islamic tour

DAMASCUS (AFP) — The founder of the group Hamas, Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, is to visit Syria soon as part of a tour of Arab and Islamic states, a party official said here Wednesday. "Sheikh Yassin will make a tour of Arab and Islamic countries, and a visit to Syria is planned but the date has yet to be fixed," Mohammad Nazzal, a member of the party's political bureau, told a news conference here.

Rebel Kurd ex-commander to appear in court Friday

DIYARBAKIR (AFP) — A former top commander of Turkey's separatist Kurdish rebels, who was captured in northern Iraq last week, is expected to appear in court Friday, judicial officials said. Semdin Sakik, former commander of the separatist Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) in southeastern Turkey, was captured by Turkish commandos on April 13 and brought to Diyarbakir for interrogation.

Turkish parliament to probe Yilmaz' finances

ANKARA (AFP) — The Turkish parliament voted Wednesday to investigate Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz's personal finances, a move which jeopardises his government. Deputies from a left-wing party which usually backs Mr. Yilmaz's minority coalition cabinet from outside the government instead supported an opposition motion seeking the probe. Following the surprise vote, a parliamentary committee will be set up to investigate Mr. Yilmaz's finances, Deputy Speaker Yassin Hatipoglu said.

Mortar attack on Algerian town kills five

ALGIERS (AFP) — Mortar shelling of the Algerian garrison town of Blida, 50 kilometres south of Algiers, killed five people and injured around 40, doctors reported Wednesday. The mortar rounds were fired late Tuesday from the Chrea mountains above the town, causing panic in areas between the outlying Ouled Yaiche and the centre of Blida, which is of the first military region, the newspaper La Tribune said.

Israeli soldier wounded in Hizbollah attack

TYRE (AFP) — An Israeli soldier was wounded in southern Lebanon on Wednesday in a mortar attack claimed by Hizbollah militia, security sources said. The soldier was injured when mortar rounds fell on an Israeli position known as Radar close to the town of Naqoura, near the Israeli-Lebanese border, they said.

Jordan pushes for movement

(Continued from page 12)

Palestinians. It was not surprising then that King Hussein wrote a letter of protest to Mr. Netanyahu on Friday, only a day after meeting with him in Eilat.

The letter, which preceded the visits of British Prime Minister Tony Blair, and U.S. Defence Secretary William Cohen to the region, reflected King Hussein's frustration with Mr. Netanyahu's refusal to commit to the American proposals for a troop withdrawal from 13 per cent of the West Bank at Thursday's Eilat talks, officials told the Jordan Times earlier this week.

According to various sources, the letter which was described as "cordial but strong," outlined all terms of reference of the Arab-Israeli conflict and all agreements signed by the Jewish State with the Palestinians, and warned of the dire consequences of failing to move ahead with the overdue second redeployment.

King Hussein's letter was primarily directed against Mr. Netanyahu, officials say. But analysts assert that King Hussein, aware of the deep respect he enjoys with Israelis, as well as the Jewish state's notoriety for media leaks, must have also been targeting Israeli public opinion.

At this point, Jordan firmly places the blame on Mr. Netanyahu for the continuing impasse, officials and analysts say. As such, it is believed that the onus is completely on the Israeli government to avert an absolute collapse in the peace process which would have major repercussions not only on Jordan but also on the entire region.

Meanwhile, analysts say, Jordan has little choice but to continue its present course of both pressing the Israeli government and ensuring good relations with major regional and international players so that its peace-making role is recognised in the future.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

JORDAN TELEVISION
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PROGRAMME TWO

Thursday Programmes
14:10 .. Cartoon — The Adventures of Dinky Di's
14:30 Doc. — The Animal Park
15:00 French Programmes
17:00 NBA
18:00 Drama — The Burned Bridge
19:00 Le Journal
19:15 Science Magazine — Alomes Crochus
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 Comedy —Big Brother Jake
20:00 Drama — The Great Romances
20:30 Drama — Dr. Quinn, the Medicine Woman
21:10 The Oprah Winfrey Show
22:00 News in English
22:30 ...Feature film — "Solo"
23:59 Comedy — Never The Twain
00:30 End of T.X.

Friday Programmes
14:10 Cartoon — The Adventures of Teddy Ruxpin
14:30 Wishbone
15:00 French Programmes
17:00 He Shoots, He Scores
17:30 Doc. — Blue Water Dreaming
18:10 Tarazan
19:00 Le Journal
19:15 Educational Programme — Allo La Terra
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 Comedy — "The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air"
20:00 Documentary — Life on the Internet
20:30 The Album Show
21:10 Drama: "Babylon-5"
22:00 News in English
22:30 Mini-series: "Sackett" (Pt. II)
23:10 ..Comedy — The Nanny
23:30 End of T.X.

PRAYER TIMES

04:31 Fajr
05:54.....(Sunrise) Duha
12:34.....Dhuhr
16:12.....'Asr
19:14.....Maghreb
20:38.....'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Sweifieh, Tel. 59207-40
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 4622366
Anglican Church Tel. 4624853/4624811.
St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox Church Tel. 771751.
Amman International Church Tel. 865897
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 5688404
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Tel. 4654932
St. John the Baptist at De la Salle College Tel. 5661757
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 4637440
Greek Orthodox Church Tel. 4646138
Church of Presentation, Sweifieh Tel. 5920146
The Uniate Catholic Church Tel. 4624757
The English-Language Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190
Evangelical Free Church Tel. 892679
The Baptist Church Tel. 4628052
The Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331
The Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology

Relative cold weather conditions will prevail, skies partly cloudy with a chance of showers in the northern and central parts of the Kingdom, and winds northwesterly moderate to active. On Friday, there will be a gradual rise of temperatures. In Aqaba, it will be fine and cloudy, winds northerly moderate, and seas calm.

Amman	08/18
Aqaba	17/27
Deserts	07/22
Jordan Valley	15/27

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 17, Aqaba 26

Humidity readings: Amman 54 per cent, Aqaba 35 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY
AMMAN:
Dr. Fayez Dabbas 759115
Dr. Adnan Zaghloul 598140
Dr. Fakher Bilbeisi 5522233
Dr. Mazen Nbali 830435
Firas pharmacy 5661912
Ferdows pharmacy 778336
Al Asema pharmacy....4637055
Nairoukh pharmacy ...4623672
Al Salam pharmacy ...4636730
Yacoub pharmacy 4644945
Shmeisani pharmacy ..4637660
Najib pharmacy 847652
IRBID:
Dr. Ahmad Qanu 281484
Al Quds pharmacy
ZARQA:
Dr. Zuhour Al Qadi 906606
Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre.....4637111
Civil Defence Department .5661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 4630341
Civil Defence Emergency.....199
Rescue Police 192, 4621111, 4637777
Fire Brigade.....4617101
Blood Bank.....775121
Highway Police.....843402
Traffic Police.....896390
Public Security Dept.....4630321
Hotel Complaints.....5605800
Price Complaints.....5661176
Water & Sewerage Complaints 897467
Amman Municipality Complaints 787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs 4623101
Abdali Tel. Repairs.....5661101
Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 5680100
J. Electricity Authority ...815615
Electric Power Co.... 4636381
RJ Flight Information..44-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport ..44-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 5921199
The Islamic, Abdli 5666131/7
Hussein Medical Centre Tel. 836813, 856856
Luzmila 4630195
Khalidi Maternity.....4644281/6
Akileh Maternity.....4642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 4642362
Malhas, J. Amman. 4636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 5607071
Shmeisani Hospital 5669131
University Hospital 5353444
Al-Muasher Hospital 5667227/9
Al-Ahli, Abdali 5664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 777101/3
Al-Bashir.....775111/26
Army, Marka 891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 5602240/50
Amal Hospital 5674155
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital(09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital(09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital..... (09)986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital(09)990990
IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital(02)275555
Greek Catholic Hospital(02)272275
Ibn Al Nafees Hospital(02)247100
AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital (031)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER
QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (44)53200 where it should always be verified.
Information on other flights are supplied on phone 44 (52700) or 44 (53250).

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
07:45 Sanaa (RJ)
10:05 Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)
10:15 New Delhi (RJ)
10:25 Bombay (RJ)
10:25 Beirut (RJ)
10:40 Muscat, Dubai (RJ)
10:50 Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
11:40 Colombo (RJ)
15:35 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
17:05 Moscow (RJ)
17:30 London (RJ)
18:45 Kuwait (RJ)
19:10 Athens (RJ)
20:10 Bangkok, Calcutta (RJ)
00:10 Larnaca (RJ)
00:30 Paris (add) (RJ)
03:15 Abu Dhabi, Al 'Ain (RJ)
06:30 Jeddah (add) (RJ)

Other Flights
13:00 Riyadh (SV)
14:10 Muscat, Abu Dhabi (GF)
15:10 Shariqah (AH)
15:40 Doha (QR)
16:00 Dubai (EK)
19:00 Paris (AF)
20:25 Tel Aviv (LY)
21:10 London (BA)
21:10 Beirut (ME)
21:40 Cairo (MS)
23:20 Istanbul (TK)
23:35 Larnaca (CY)
01:15 ..Amsterdam, Beirut (KL)
03:00 Rome (AZ)

Royal Wings (RW)
(For Thursday and Friday)
10:20 Aqaba (arriving at QAIA and proceeding to Marka Airport) (RW)
20:20 Tel Aviv (QAIA — on Friday (RW)
22:35 Tel Aviv (QAIA — on Thursday((RW)
23:50 Amman (Marka Airport from Aqaba) (RW)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
06:45 Beirut (RJ)
07:20 Moscow (RJ)
11:55 ... Aqaba, Paris (add) (RJ)
12:15 Tunis, Casablanca (RJ)
12:45 Amsterdam, Chicago (RJ)
12:20 Kuwait (RJ)
13:00 Paris (RJ)
13:20 London (RJ)
13:20 Athens (RJ)
19:00 ... Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)
20:50 Larnaca (RJ)
21:10 Cairo (RJ)
21:20 Jeddah (RJ)
00:30 ..Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta (RJ)
01:30 Jeddah (add) (RJ)

Other Flights
06:15 Istanbul (TK)
07:00 Frankfurt (LH)
08:20 London (BA)
08:45 Beirut (ME)
14:30 Riyadh (SV)
15:00 Abu Dhabi (GF)
16:00 ...Annabah, Algiers (AH)
16:30 Doha (QR)
17:00 Damascus, Dubai (EK)
21:10 Tel Aviv (LY)
22:40 Cairo (MS)
02:15 Amsterdam (KL)
04:00 Rome (AZ)

Royal Wings
(For Thursday and Friday)
08:00 Aqaba (from Marka Airport) (RW)
20:45 Tel Aviv (from QAIA — on Thursday only) (RW)
21:30 Aqaba (from QAIA) (RW)

Home

Man arreste... abusing wife...

By Rana Husseini
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Police said on Wednesday they arrested a 29-year-old father suspected of abusing seven of his eight children and his wife.

The children, aged between four and nine, suffered from bites and abrasions on various parts of their bodies caused by an electrical cord and blunt objects, police surgeon Hani Jabshan told the Jordan Times.

"The children, who were admitted to the Family Protection Unit on Tuesday, were in a miserable state, wearing dirty and torn clothes," he added.

The 29-year-old mother was also examined by Dr. Jabshan.

"The woman had fresh and week-old bruises and scars left by burns when I examined her on Wednesday," he said. "She told me that her husband had beaten her up."

According to Hussein Sarhan, head of the Family Protection Unit, police received a phone call from unidentified citizens informing them about several children who had been left in a house for almost four days without any family care.

"We went to the house and found all seven children sleeping on a bed in poor conditions," Dr. Sarhan said.

The father, who has denied charges that he tortured his children, is currently in police custody pending further investigations, he added.

"The man kicked his wife out of the house after a fight four weeks ago, leaving the children without care since," he said.

Jordan to observe International Book with cultural pro...

AMMAN (Petra) — The Ministry of Culture and Youth is prepared a cultural programme to mark "International Book and Publishing Rights Day," which Jordan observes today, according to a ministry official.

Secretary General Mahmoud Tal on Wednesday said the ministry is keen on exposing Jordan's cultural heritage as well as protecting the rights of authors and the work of creative people and artists. A modern copy rights law was enacted in 1992 for this purpose, he added.

By observing the day, which is sponsored at the world level by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), Jordan can project its role and its activities it conducts as an active organisation member, Dr. Tal said.

Jordan has always respected internationally recognised principles and rules concerning the protection of the rights of authors and the right of publishing with a view to promoting and encouraging creativity and excellence, he added.

Dr. Tal said the ministry car-

What's Going O...

SCANDINAVIAN FILM WEEK

* Swedish film "The Brothers Lionheart" (with subtitles in English) at the Royal Cultural Centre on Saturday, April 25, at 7:30 p.m.

FILMS

* Spanish film "Montoyas y Tarantos" at Instituto Cervantes, Jebal Amman on Thursday at 7:30 p.m.

* "Jurassic Park" at the American Center, Abdoun on Thursday at 5:00 p.m.

* "The Other Face of the Moon" (in English) about Jacques Cousteau de Seael (with commentaries in Arabic by Dr. Mazen Hammad) at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Luweibdeh on Thursday at 6:00 p.m.

* "My name is Bertolt Brecht" (with subtitles in English) in USA" (with subtitles in German) at the University of

Jordan...
10:00 p.m.

EXHIB...

* Art exhibition by Alaiyah Saleh at the American Cultural Center, Jebal Amman, Tel... April 26

* Works by Mohammad... Gallery, Shmeisani, ...

* Photographic exhibition entitled "A Tour Sicily" by Jacques ... the French Cultural ... April 30.

Man arrested for abusing wife, children

By Rana Husseini
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Police said on Wednesday they arrested a 33-year-old father suspected of abusing seven of his eight children and his wife.

The children, aged between four and nine, suffered from bites and abrasions and bruises on various parts of their bodies caused by an electrical cord and blunt objects, police surgeon Hani Jahshan told the Jordan Times.

"The children, who were admitted to the Family Protection Unit on Tuesday, were in a miserable situation, wearing dirty and torn clothes," he added.

The 28-year-old mother was also examined by Dr. Jahshan.

"The woman had four-week-old bruises and scars left by biting when I examined her on Wednesday," he said. "She told me that her husband had beaten her up."

According to Hussein Sarhan, head of the Family Protection Unit, police received a phone call from an unidentified citizen informing them about several children who had been left in a house for almost two weeks without any family care.

"We went to the house and found all seven children sitting on a bed in poor condition," Dr. Sarhan said.

The father, who has denied charges that he tortured his children, is currently in police custody pending further investigations, he added.

"The man kicked his wife out of the house after a fight four weeks ago, leaving the children without care since," he said.

Police apprehend abused child's father

In a separate incident Wednesday, police apprehended the father of an eight-year-old girl who on Monday sought refuge at the Family Protection Unit with burn scars all over her body, Dr. Sarhan said.

The child, who lived with her father and stepmother in Al Hussein Refugee Camp, told the police surgeon that her dad had whipped her and placed hot objects on different parts of her body.

The girl, identified as Abeer, said she fled the house and headed to seek help from her mother, who had re-married and lives in Zarqa.

"The father confessed to torturing his daughter to take revenge on his wife for their failed marriage," Dr. Sarhan said.

Both fathers involved in the separate cases have been transferred to the criminal prosecution for further questioning.

Dr. Sarhan said police were still looking for an unidentified man who allegedly took a two-year-old child to the Municipality Garden and attempted to sexually assault him five days ago.

"The child was brought to us by a citizen who was walking near the area and saw the man undressing the child," Dr. Sarhan said.

The citizen had a fight with the man before the latter fled, leaving the child behind.

The unit was established recently to deal with victims of domestic violence. It operates under the Public Security Department.

Jordan to observe International Book Day with cultural programme

AMMAN (Petra) — The Ministry of Culture and Youth has prepared a cultural programme to mark "International Book and Publishing Rights Day," which Jordan observes today, according to a ministry official.

Secretary General Mahmoud Tal on Wednesday said the ministry is keen on exposing Jordan's cultural heritage as well as protecting the rights of authors and the work of creative people and artists. A modern copy rights law was enacted in 1992 for this purpose, he added.

By observing the day, which is sponsored at the world level by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), Jordan can project its role and the activities it conducts as an active organisation member, said Dr. Tal.

Jordan has always respected internationally recognised principles and rules concerning the protection of the rights of authors and the right of publishing with a view to promoting and encouraging creativity and excellence, he added.

Dr. Tal said the ministry carries out activities to promote culture in different parts of Jordan and gives particular attention to traditional handicrafts, theatre, children's songs and the nation's cultural heritage in general.

Mohammad Abbadi, acting director of the national library, Wednesday said his department gives due attention to raising cultural awareness by circulating books to all public libraries, clubs and other associations.

The national library, he added, is concerned with collecting manuscripts, documentaries, periodicals and other tools of cultural heritage. It also supervises the work of public libraries and organises seminars and conferences related to library work as well as book exhibitions in Jordan and abroad.

At present, Mr. Abbadi said, the national library contains 75,000 books and reference materials in addition to 420 specialised documents, 400,000 photos, 200 magazines and periodicals in English and Arabic on the work of Jordanian writers and all the editions of the Official Gazette since it began publishing in 1923.

What's Going On

SCANDINAVIAN FILM WEEK

* Swedish film "The Brothers Lionheart" (with subtitles in English) at the Royal Cultural Centre on Saturday, April 25, at 7:00 p.m.

FILMS

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* "Jurassic Park" at the American Center, Abdoun on Thursday at 5:00 p.m.
* "The Other Face of the Form" (in English) about artist Nicolas de Stael (with commentary in Arabic by Dr. Mazen Asfour) at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh on Thursday at 6:00 p.m.
* "My name is Bertolt Brecht — Exile in USA" (with subtitles in German) at the University of Jordan on Saturday, April 25, at 1:00 p.m.

CONCERT

* Classical music concert by the Austrian boys choir "Die Sängerknaben vom Wienerwald" (the Boys Choir from the Vienna Woods) at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

* Art exhibition at the Ahliyyah School for Girls, Jabal Amman (Tel. 4624872), until April 25.
* Works by Yassin Al Mohammadawi at the Orient Gallery, Shmeisani (Tel. 5681303/4), until May 7.
* Photographic exhibition entitled "A Tour in the Dead Sea" by Jaussen and Savignac at the French Cultural Centre, until April 30.

Jordan, Tunisia issue call to advance peace process

Higher joint committee meeting in Tunis ends with free trade agreement

TUNIS (Petra) — Jordan and Tunisia Wednesday called for efforts to be made to remove obstacles impeding the peace process, particularly on the Israeli-Palestinian track.

The two countries made the call in a joint communiqué issued at the end of a two-day meeting in Tunis by the Joint Jordanian Tunisian Higher Committee, which was co-chaired by Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali and his Tunisian counterpart Hamed Qarawi.

They also emphasised the need for all parties to be committed to the implementation of signed agreements in order to achieve a just and comprehensive peace in accordance with U.N. Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338.

In the communiqué, the two sides demanded a full Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Syrian Golan Heights and the resumption of Syrian-Israeli negotiations, as well as a complete Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon in implementation of U.N. Security Council Resolution 425.

Jordan and Tunisia called for efforts to develop and consolidate joint Arab action, strengthen the Arab League and its various agencies and promote inter-Arab solidarity.

The communiqué said the joint committee reviewed the situation in the Middle East and called on the sponsors of the peace process, the European Union, the non-aligned nations, the U.N. and world organisations to lend support to the peace process to ensure that Israel respects the requirements of peace based on the exchange of land for peace and implements its agreements with Arab parties.

The two sides announced their resolve to provide all possible economic and political backing to the Palestinian people.

Referring to Iraq, the communiqué welcomed the Baghdad-U.N. agreement and expressed hope that it would lead to the lifting of sanctions imposed on Iraq since 1990 and end the suffering of the Iraqi people.

The two sides also called for the lifting of sanctions on the Libyan people, especially since Libya has now expressed its readiness to reach a peaceful settlement to the Lockerbie problem.

They voiced support for the United Arab Emirates in its quest to regain ownership of the three islands in the Gulf occupied by Iran, calling for a peaceful solution to the problem through the International Court of Justice.

The two sides reaffirmed the importance of the Barcelona Declaration, which paves the way for European-Arab association and cooperation in political, economic, social and security fields.

Jordan and Tunisia reviewed questions of common concern and expressed their desire to further promote economic and trade cooperation.

According to the communiqué, the two countries decided to gradually create a free trade zone for their national products. To achieve this objective, they signed an agreement on setting up a free trade zone.

The two countries decided to give priority to imports from each other, coordinate economic matters and increase the volume of trade to reach $50 million annually by the year 2000.

Jordan and Tunisia also passed decisions on promoting cooperation between businesspeople and industrialists from the two countries, cooperating in the fields of investment, agriculture, civil aviation, land, and maritime and air transport, increasing cooperation in tourism, and executing cultural agreements.

They agreed to sign a protocol on sports and youth and to cooperate in the fields of security, the judiciary, health information, administrative development, social affairs and vocational training.



Die Saengerknaben vom Wienerwald

Austrian boys choir to perform in Amman

By Jean-Claude Elias
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Under the patronage of Her Majesty Queen Noor, the Austrian boys choir "Die Sängerknaben vom Wienerwald" (literally, the Boys Choir from the Vienna Woods) will perform today at the Royal Cultural Centre.

The concert, which is being presented as an entertainment show for the whole family, is in support of the SOS Children's Village Association of Jordan.

The ensemble is the perfect ambassador of the Viennese choir tradition. With a repertoire that covers Joseph Strauss, Johann Strauss, Franz Lehar, Franz Schubert and Ludwig Gruber, among other composers, the "Boys from the Woods" are bound to delight all lovers of choral music in Amman.

The choir was originally founded in 1921 by Stanislaus Maruszczyk in Maria Enzerdorf, near Modling. The young boys usually join the choir at the early age of seven or eight, and follow a three-year music course. They give an average of 50 concerts every year.

In 1996, on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of its foundation, the ensemble made its very successful 14th concert tour of Japan, where it has been performing since 1968.

Fresh, clear voices and lovely, catchy melodies are the trademarks of the Boys Choir. The singers remain young children before all. They love to sing and play on stage. Sharing their feelings and their love for music with the audience is what they like most.

PPD chief, foreign Arabic daily engaging in heated public debate

By Alia Shukri Hamzeh
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Months of tension between the Press and Publications Department (PPD) and the London-based Arabic daily Al Hayat have turned into an open tug-of-war, with a local newspaper providing a forum for bitter exchanges.

Al Arab Al Yawm Arabic daily ran an article Tuesday by PPD Director Bilal Tal criticising Al Hayat's chief editor, Jihad Khazen, for a column he wrote last week slamming an alleged crackdown on press freedoms since he took over in November.

Mr. Khazen, one of the Arab World's veteran journalists, claimed that Mr. Tal had banned around 35 copies of Al Hayat from entering Jordan over the past five months, compared to less than 25 copies that were not authorised to enter the Kingdom in the previous ten years.

He also charged Mr. Tal of becoming "more royal than His Majesty King Hussein" in his endeavours to safeguard government measures taken to protect Jordan and its democracy and freedoms.

Mr. Khazen also expressed surprise with the PPD's recent hard-line approach toward Al Hayat, explaining that the paper's editorial policy concerning Jordan has always been consistent.

"The only thing that changed is that Mr. Tal has become head of the PPD," Mr. Khazen wrote.

Mr. Khazen reviewed the peace treaty Jordan signed with Israel and concluded that Jordan had suffered more than gained. "Jordan's economy worsened and Hamas leader Khaled Misha'al survived an assassination attempt by Mossad agents," he added.

"How can Mr. Tal deal with such issues? Does he think that by banning people from writing on crucial issues that they will eventually disappear?"

Mr. Tal responded in a letter to Mr. Khazen, published in Al Arab Al Yawm, that he was surprised with the conclusions and assumptions of Mr. Khazen, saying "he has obviously assumed the role of a consultant to Jordan, forgetting at the same time the long history of the Jordanian leadership's good judgement and wisdom."

Mr. Tal criticised Mr. Khazen's role as chief editor of Al Hayat and said that he should always make sure that his paper reports the truth.

"The number of editions confiscated by PPD as stated in Mr. Khazen's article is completely false and baseless. In fact, the number 35 in the past five months is highly exaggerated," he said, refraining at the same time from providing a figure.

He also said his department did not confiscate Al Hayat editions because it felt like doing so or wanted to restrict freedom of expression, but because it found certain articles in the paper that violated the Press and Publications Law.

"We respect and call for freedom of expression but we do not allow the publication of certain items that are lacking truth and objectivity, especially if they do not reflect the true position or the true image of Jordan," he said.

"In the end, the law has to prevail, and we will make sure it will, especially if it stops papers from publishing false information in the name of freedom of expression."

Many journalists claim that the PPD has tightened its grip over local and foreign reporters in the past year and confiscated many international editions of foreign newspapers.

The PPD denies such claims, saying that it is acting within the limits of the law.

The government issued a temporary press law last May which the High Court found "unconstitutional" and annulled several months later.

The law was condemned and described by the press as well as human rights advocates as restrictive to freedom of expression.

It had extended the list of issues forbidden to be reported in the press, increased fines for violations of the law from a maximum of JD6,000 in the original law to a maximum of JD50,000 in the temporary law, placed tough conditions for employing chief editors, and raised capital requirement of dailies and weeklies, forcing over 13 tabloids to close down.

Court sentences man to four years for weapons possession

By Rana Husseini
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The State Security Court Wednesday sentenced a 34-year-old man to four years in prison with hard labour after he was found guilty of attempting to manufacture explosives and possessing illegal weapons.

Ismat Shukri was originally charged with smuggling weapons to the West Bank and plotting subversive acts, but the court decided to amend the charges.

The military court, presided over by Judge Yousef Fa'ouri and including Judges Ahmad Ayash and Fawaz Boqour, first sentenced Mr. Shukri to seven and one-half years with hard labour but commuted the sentence "because the defendant has no criminal record and supports a family."

"We expected the court to acquit our clients, since the testimonies of the explosive experts were contradictory," Attorney Saleh Armouti, one of three attorneys defending the suspect, told the Jordan Times.

Attorneys Salam Shunar, Islam Elian, and Armouti said they were planning to appeal the verdict at the Court of Cassation.

"We do not believe that there was a case against our client to start with," Atty. Armouti added.

The court heard several prosecution and defence witnesses during the five-month trial, including an explosives expert called by the defence who testified that the substance the authorities found on Mr. Shukri could not be detonated.

Two other defendants, Ali Abdul Karim and Mohammad Mubarak, both tried in absentia, were each sentenced to 15-year imprisonment terms with hard labour.

Mr. Shukri testified in court that he owned machine guns because he was a member of a radical Palestinian group until 1992, and that the handgrenade the authorities seized from his house was "in fact a piece of a small metal box shaped like a grenade that I found in the street and gave to my children to play with as a toy."

The prosecution charged that the arms and the handgrenade, which was filled with potassium nitrate, were intended for terrorist attacks.

Several prosecution witnesses testified under oath that they found automatic weapons and explosives in the defendant's house and in a suitcase, which the prosecution charged belonged to Mr. Shukri, hidden in the Zara area near the Dead sea.

State Prosecutor Samih Majali had asked the court for the maximum penalty.

Former justice reiterates charges that judiciary lacks independence

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The former chief of the Higher Judicial Council, Farouq Kilani, who was removed from office by fellow judges on Feb. 23, Tuesday reiterated his charges that the government interferes in the affairs of the judicial branch.

"The judiciary will never be independent as long as we have ministers and influential officials interfering in cases at courts," Judge Kilani said in a lecture at the Arab Forum.

The Higher Judicial Council, acting upon a recommendation by Minister of Justice Riyad Shakaa, voted unanimously to retire Judge Kilani, who was then the Council's president and head of the Court of Cassation.

According to the Independence of the Judiciary Law, the minister has a right to recommend the retirement of any judge.

In March, the minister explained that he had no personal reasons for recommending the retirement of Judge Kilani but rather his decision was "dictated by the interest of the judiciary in a manner that would ensure harmony and security for all those who work in the justice system."

But Judge Kilani, who was appointed by Mr. Shakaa, said his retirement, was related to his fight against corrupt judges, which he said was blessed by His Majesty King Hussein but opposed by the minister.

"I was not against any judge. I only investigated cases that were referred to me by the anti-corruption department [at the General Intelligence Department] about corrupt judges, and I gave a memo to the King including the names of judges our investigations proved were corrupt, and the King signed it," Judge Kilani noted.

Judge Kilani asked an audience of attorneys, judges and former judges: "How can judges rule fairly if they are subjected to threats of being removed if they rule in a way certain officials do not like?"

He charged that he was removed because there was a contention in the government that he played a role in overturning the controversial temporary amendments to the 1993 Press and Publications Law.

"I only wrote my opinion in the press case, but did not sign it because I was promoted to another post. The judges of the High Court of Justice, who took the final decision, followed my recommendation," Judge Kilani said.

In January, the High Court of Justice revoked the amendments to the law, which forced 13 newspapers to fold, on the ground that their enactment in May 1997 was unconstitutional.

Judge Kilani cited a speech His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan made at the Judicial Institute, in which the Prince emphasised the importance of the judicial independence.

"Prince Hassan sees the independence of the judiciary as having political and social dimensions beyond its legal dimensions," he said.

He quoted Prince Hassan as saying: "Judicial independence is granted by the Constitution. A judge should resist any pressures to which he/she may be subjected. Responding to interference makes the judiciary lose its independence."

"But still, ministers interfere in any case that is seen in courts," Judge Kilani charged.

Islamic organisation expresses interest in developing ties with Jordan

AMMAN (Petra) — The secretary general of the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (ISESCO), Abdul Aziz Tweijri, met Wednesday with Acting Prime Minister Abdullah Ensour and voiced the organisation's interest in further developing cooperation with Jordan.

Dr. Tweijri said the organisation aims to serve its member countries, contribute to the development of culture, education and science in Islamic states, open a dialogue with other world cultures, and present the true image of Islam.

Dr. Ensour and the ISESCO secretary general reviewed scopes of cooperation between the organisation and Jordan in cultural fields, as well as joint activities.

The acting prime minister expressed Jordan's appreciation of ISESCO's role in serving the interests of Islamic countries, strengthening relations among them and spearheading campaigns designed to rectify misconceptions about Islam in the world at large.

Dr. Ensour also commended ISESCO for its achievements at other levels, in particular for building bridges of understanding and cooperation among Islamic countries.

He added that Jordan was grateful to Muslim nations, particularly Saudi Arabia, for ISESCO's programmes and activities.

Jordan Times
Tel.
5684311-5699634

Yeltsin to meet parliament speakers on eve of vote

MOSCOW (AFP) — President Boris Yeltsin stood firm in his support for interim Premier Sergei Kiriyenko Wednesday, ruling out a compromise candidate despite agreeing to 11th-hour crisis talks with parliamentary leaders.

The Communist Party, which opposes Mr. Kiriyenko, meanwhile said it would demand a roll call vote Friday. In theory, this hurts the Kremlin's chances of winning approval for the young technocrat to run the government.

Mr. Yeltsin is to meet State Duma lower house speaker Gennady Seleznyov and his Federation Council upper house counterpart Yegor Stroyev on the eve of Friday's decisive, third-round vote on Mr. Kiriyenko's confirmation as premier.

The talks will centre on the Duma's vote on Mr. Kiriyenko, Mr. Stroyev was cited by ITAR-TASS as saying, when deputies face the choice of either confirming Mr. Yeltsin's nominee or seeing their chamber dissolved and fresh elections called.

But the Kremlin moved to scotch suggestions the meeting signalled Mr. Yeltsin had softened his position and was prepared to dump the young technocrat he plucked from semi-obscurity last month.

"The position of the Russian president on the candidacy of Sergei Kiriyenko as prime minister is definitive and cannot be changed," said a Kremlin statement cited by Interfax.

Mr. Kiriyenko, who garnered just 143 and 115 votes in the Duma on the two previous rounds of voting, needs 226 votes in the 450-seat lower house to secure confirmation.

Communist Party leader Gennady Zyuganov said the Communist Party will demand an open ballot at Friday's vote, Interfax.

Mr. Kiriyenko was humiliated in a similar roll call ballot in a second confirmation vote last Friday, which stiffened party discipline and made it more difficult for the Kremlin to buy votes.

He polled just 115 votes compared to the 143 he garnered on the first round, well below the 226 votes he needs to pass.

Wednesday's developments came amid increasing signs that deputies would back Mr. Kiriyenko, despite the vehement opposition of Communists who dominate the lower chamber.

"Ninety-nine per cent of deputies from my faction will vote for Kiriyenko," said ultranationalist leader Vladimir Zhirinovsky, whose party voted against Mr. Yeltsin's protégé last Friday.

"We will vote for a secret ballot, and that means Kiriyenko could get 230 votes," he added. Analysts said last week's roll call vote stiffened party discipline and prevented the Kremlin from vote-buying.

Moscow Echo radio reported that a majority of regional governors, who sit in the upper house Federation Council, were against dissolution and said that deputies should vote for Mr. Kiriyenko.

Vasily Starodubtsev, governor of Tula region, 200 kilometres south of Moscow, said: "One should not tell the Duma what it should do, but it should take such a decision (to back Kiriyenko), which will avoid a political crisis."

Communist leader Zyuganov, marking the anniversary of Lenin's birth at the revolutionary leader's Red Square mausoleum, insisted he would "convince" a special meeting of his party's central committee Thursday "to vote against Sergei Kiriyenko," ITAR-TASS reported.

However, the leader of the People's Power faction, hitherto allied with the Communists against Mr. Kiriyenko, Tuesday called for deputies to approve the candidate to stave off dissolution.

Try to seek a compromise with Mr. Yeltsin to avoid the costly dissolution of parliament, which neither side really wants.

"You will find out that the Duma will not be dissolved," Mr. Stroyev, who with Mr. Seleznyov is a perennial mediators between Russia's feuding president and Duma deputies, ITAR-TASS reported.

Mr. Seleznyov said he would ask Mr. Yeltsin to personally present Mr. Kiriyenko's candidacy, adding: "I am going to ask the president to allow Mr. Kiriyenko to lift a corner of the veil surrounding the composition of the government.

"Deputies want to know who is going to apply the government's programme and who from the previous government will not be in the new one.

"Moreover, I am going to ask the president that the Duma be kept informed of plans for the (Russian controlled) Kuril Islands," which are at the centre of a territorial dispute with Japan.

The upper house meanwhile plays host to Mr. Kiriyenko Wednesday to put questions to the candidate about his government programme, already twice rejected by the lower house.

Mr. Yeltsin met the two speakers soon after the political crisis erupted in Moscow on March 23, when the Russian president sacked the previous government and appointed the little-known Kiriyenko to draw up a new cabinet.

The talks yielded a round-table with all Russia's political leaders to discuss the stand-off between president and parliament over Mr. Kiriyenko, though Mr. Yeltsin conceded little.

The stand-off between president and parliament has threatened the most explosive showdown in Moscow since Mr. Yeltsin sent tanks to crush a parliamentary uprising in October 1993.



Chief of staff General Anatoly Kvashnin (right) welcomes Supreme Allied Commander for Europe General Wesley Clark to a top level meeting in Moscow. Defence Minister Igor Sergeyev failed to show up for the meeting with NATO's top general Wednesday, as planned, and Russian officers said it was because their chief was 'busy' (Reuters photo)

Russian defence minister in snub to NATO military chief Clark

MOSCOW (AFP) — Russian Defence Minister Igor Sergeyev Wednesday snubbed visiting NATO military chief General Wesley Clark, cancelling a planned meeting between the two.

Although Russian officials played down the rebuff, Gen. Clark had wanted to raise a number of issues in person with the Russian defence minister during his brief two-day visit to the Russian capital, NATO sources said.

However, the chief of the Russian defence staff General Anatoly Kvashnin, denied the Russian side had agreed to a face-to-face meeting between the two men.

"We didn't have anything planned," Gen. Kvashnin told reporters after a brief meeting with Gen. Clark at the defence ministry in central Moscow.

"It was foreseen in the original programme but when the final programme was drawn up it was dropped," he said.

"The minister has a packed agenda. He has been ordered by the president (Boris Yeltsin) to attend the Federation Council where several bills are under examination," said Gen. Kvashnin.

Gen. Clark, the four-star U.S. general who is NATO supreme allied commander-Europe, is due to leave Russia later Wednesday.

He was in Moscow for talks with Russian officials about deepening defence cooperation, notably within the Partnership for Peace which offers closer military cooperation between the Western defence alliance while stopping short of membership.

Rwanda to stage first genocide executions

KIGALI (R) — The first 33 Rwandans convicted for the genocide of an estimated 800,000 people in 1994 will be executed in public Friday, state radio said Wednesday.

It said the executions would be carried out at Kigali's soccer stadium and in four provincial towns in the tiny central African country.

"It has been decided that the first 33 genocide convicts will be executed in public this Friday at 10 a.m. (0800 GMT)," radio Rwanda said, quoting a communiqué from a special cabinet meeting held Monday.

"This will act as a lesson to people who do not respect the life of others," it said. The radio broadcast the government's warning against Hutu militiamen "still bent on pursuing genocide."

It said President Pasteur Bizimungu turned down a request for amnesty at Monday's cabinet meeting which also amended the law to allow the executions to be held in public.

The means of execution and the identity of those to be killed were not immediately known.

Rwanda began its genocide trials in December 1996 and has condemned scores of people to death for playing active parts in the three-month genocide by Hutu extremists.

An estimated 800,000 ethnic Tutsis and moderate Hutus were killed in the genocide, which ended when the former Hutu government was driven from power by rebel forces.

Rwanda's prisons are packed with about 130,000 prisoners — overwhelmingly Hutus — awaiting trial for the genocide.

The radio said originally 34 genocide convicts were due to be executed but one had died in prison.

It listed the five execution sites as Nyamirambo soccer stadium in Kigali, Nyamata in Kigali province, Murambi in northeastern Umutara, Gikongoro in the south and Cyasemakamba in the east.

Official sources said the public executions were meant to discourage the ongoing armed Hutu insurgency.

Survivors have complained about the slow pace at which both Rwanda's judiciary and the international criminal tribunal for Rwanda, based in Tanzania, are processing the trials of genocide suspects.

Britain defends decision to accept Georgian nuclear material

LONDON (AFP) — Britain's Labour government Wednesday sought to justify its decision to accept enriched uranium from Georgia for reprocessing in Scotland as a means of preventing it falling into the wrong hands.

Faced with a public outcry from environmentalists and some politicians, over the deal and the secrecy surrounding it, Foreign Secretary Robin Cook said there would be no more consignments of the kind.

He told BBC radio: "We understand that this is the last such consignment around the countries of the former Soviet Union, and this is the end of the story."

A total of 5.1 kilos of uranium, including 800 grammes of waste fuel, will be flown in American transport aircraft from the ex-Soviet state on April 27 to the Dounreay nuclear complex in Scotland.

Media reports of the "secret deal" between Britain and U.S. President Bill Clinton to take the material have led to calls on Prime Minister Tony Blair to pledge that "Britain will not be the final repository for Georgian nuclear waste or nuclear waste from any other country."

Alex Salmon, the Scottish National Party leader, accused Mr. Blair of "prostituting Scotland as a world nuclear dustbin to curry favour with the Clinton administration."

A number of Labour MPs were also reported to have expressed concern about Britain being seen as a "soft touch" for the dumping of nuclear waste.

But Mr. Cook justified the government's decision to reprocess the uranium as intended to prevent it falling into the wrong hands.

He said the United States was accepting some 600 kgs from former states of the Soviet Union. "We (Britain) are accepting in this case five kilos."

Mr. Cook said the material in question was not highly radioactive, but was highly explosive and of weapons grade material.

It was in a country which had a major civil war. "It cannot for safety be left, be maintained properly where it is at risk. If it went into wrong hands, and Georgia is not that far away from the Middle East, then it can pose a real danger," he added.

"If we're looking at the risk, then if this material was to be used in a nuclear weapon in the Middle East, Britain and Europe would get far more than one per cent of the radioactive fall-out, so taking one per cent (of the material) isn't a bad bargain from our point of view."

Private experts have said that the material in the Tbilisi reactor could be used by a skilled atomic bomb maker to make a one-kilotonne nuclear device — equivalent to 1,000 tonnes of dynamite.

A Downing Street spokesman said that the decision to accept the shipment reflected safety considerations. Britain's "strong commitment to the nuclear non-proliferation regime" and a desire to "avoid the possibility of it being misused in any way."

But he acknowledged that the government had kept quiet about the deal for security reasons. "For obvious reasons the movement of this sort of stuff is kept confidential."

Mr. Cook said that most of the material would be turned into medically used isotopes for the treatment of cancer patients.

But doubts have been raised about Britain's capacities for treating the irradiated uranium.

Nuclear Installations Inspectorate senior site inspector Frances Taylor said the Dounreay complex was capable of storing the nuclear material, but that it would have to develop a proper safety case for the further reprocessing of the fuel.

"They have various plants that would be available on time, but at the moment we are still waiting for the revised safety case for these plants and they are considering upgrades to them at the moment," Mr. Taylor said.

"Dounreay can store it safely for the time being. Once it's on site we will discuss with them in detail what they are going to do with it."

Burundi says 34 die in rebel clashes

BUJUMBURA (R) — At least 34 people were killed in Burundi late last week during an army operation south of Bujumbura, a defence ministry spokesman said Wednesday.

Army spokesman Lieutenant-Colonel Isaie Nibizi said 30 rebels, two soldiers and two civilians were killed in a two-day operation which began last Thursday in the Dama River valley, 60 kilometres south of the capital.

"The military was on patrol and ran into a group of assailants. There was an exchange of fire and 30 rebels and two of our soldiers were killed," Lt. Col. Nibizi said, adding that the two civilians killed had been patrolling the area with troops.

The report could not be independently confirmed.

More than 150,000 people have been killed in Burundi since the assassination of the country's first democratically elected president in 1993 sparked a low-scale civil war between Tutsi troops and Hutu rebels.

Lt. Col. Nibizi said soldiers had recovered five Kalashnikov rifles in the operation, and added the area had been calm since.

He said rebels were still entrenched in Bujumbura-Rurale — the province surrounding the capital — but the army had not recently made contact with them.

Aid workers and local officials say 20,000 civilians are displaced in Isale Commune, about 20 kilometres east of Bujumbura, due to rebel activity in the area.

Lt. Col. Nibizi said another large group of civilians had been displaced in Mubimbi Commune, about 20 kilometres northeast of the capital, but said he had no other details.

Geneva closes Onassis kidnapping case

GENEVA (R) — A Geneva prosecutor has ruled there was no plot to kidnap Athena Roussel, sole heir to the $3 billion fortune of Greek shipping Tycoon Aristotle Onassis, the investigating judge said Wednesday.

Prosecutor Jean-Louis Crochet ruled that suspicious acts by Israeli agents who followed and photographed the 13-year-old and her security entourage last year was in fact a "security audit," according to the investigating magistrate, Jacques Delieutraz.

Greek trustees of Athina's fortune told a news conference in Athens last November that they had hired private Israeli investigators to secretly check on her security around her home in western Switzerland and elsewhere.

Athina's father and legal guardian, Frenchman Thierry Roussel who filed a complaint last year, has appealed against the ruling to a higher Geneva court, according to the judge.

Disclosure of the alleged plot, uncovered by Geneva police in February 1997, has brought into the open a bitter legal battle between the flamboyant Roussel and the four other trustees, all Greek, who jointly manage the girl's fortune.

"Crochet has closed the case. He said the file showed that the bizarre behaviour did not constitute preparatory acts to commit a crime, as had been believed," Mr. Delieutraz told Reuters.

"The idea was a security audit, but they used disproportionate methods which went beyond an audit," he added. "There were slippages. There were lies."

Dismissal means that international arrest warrants issued by Mr. Delieutraz against six Israelis on suspicion of attempted kidnapping and preparatory acts to commit a crime are withdrawn, according to the magistrate. Three suspects — an Israeli, a Swiss and an American — were briefly detained in Geneva and in Milan.

Deposed Cambodian prince says return dependent upon safety

SIEM REAP, Cambodia (AFP) — Deposed Cambodian leader Prince Norodom Ranariddh said Wednesday he would only return permanently when international observers could monitor the safety of his supporters for elections in July.

The prince said after an audience with his father, King Norodom Sihanouk, in this northern city that he was concerned about his supporters.

"It is up to me but I expressed to his majesty, the king, that up to now some countries are worried that I am not back and campaigning. I am not worried about myself, but I have to be worried about my supporters, for their security," he said.

"I am asking that (more) long-time observers be sent ... then I will be able to stay."

Prince Ranariddh, making just his second brief visit home since his ouster last year, said the king supported his request and appealed to other nations, noting that serious concerns had been raised about political intimidation and violence.

Nearly 100 of the prince's supporters have been murdered since he was ousted, according to human rights workers.

"Observers should be sent as soon as possible, not only to Phnom Penh but also to provinces, districts and communes," the prince said, adding that only with additional monitors could the election be "reasonably free and fair."

He stressed, however, that he was not suggesting a return to 1992-1993 when nearly 20,000 United Nations personnel organised and ran elections that his party narrowly won.

The prince did not say exactly how many observers he thought were necessary, but it was clear he did not feel the current seven U.N. seven observers monitoring the safety of opposition politicians was sufficient. The number of U.N. safety monitors is expected to increase to 15 soon and will be supplemented by an estimated 350 U.N.-coordinated monitors who will be looking specifically at the July 26 polls.

Most of the "short term" monitors are not scheduled to arrive in Cambodia until shortly before July 26.

The international community is pushing for the prince to be allowed to participate in polls but has been slow to pick up on the calls for observers.

Instead, it has put much of its weight behind a Japanese-sponsored peace plan aimed at ensuring the vote is free and fair by allowing the prince to stand in the election.

However, only one step in the four-point plan — a pardon clearing two criminal convictions against the prince by a military court in early March — has yet to be completed.

Prince Ranariddh, who arrived earlier Wednesday and is to return to Bangkok Friday, said the discussions with his father had been very cordial.

"I feel of course very moved about being back today and, in particular, very moved that today I got to pay homage to his majesty, the king," he said after the audience.

On his arrival, the prince said only the king had the moral authority to push for free and fair elections.

"Only his majesty, the king, has the ability to help in achieving the elections," Prince Ranariddh said. "He is the guarantor of peace, democracy and human rights."

"I want his majesty the king to find national reconciliation and democracy and (free and fair) elections."

At a later rally at the headquarters of his royalist FUNCINPEC party, Prince Ranariddh reaffirmed his comments to about 300 supporters.

"I know people do not want to hear fighting," he said. "They want peace under the cool shade of his majesty, the king. If we continue to take revenge against each other, it will only mean more suffering for the people."

Army uncovers hidden heroin factories in Golden Triangle

YANGON (AFP) — Myanmar army units on "mopping up operations" in the Golden Triangle region of northeast Shan State have uncovered nine secret heroin refineries, reports said Wednesday.

The state-run New Light of Myanmar newspaper said troops stumbled across one clandestine drug factory near Muse township on the Sino-Myanmar border, about 720 kilometres northeast of Yangon.

The report said they seized one kilogramme of heroin, 140 kilogrammes of opium, 22.5 kilogrammes of raw opium and hundreds of gallons of chemicals used to refine opium into heroin.

Three more factories — some still functioning — were also found in the area.

Further south in the town of Kutkai, five old and abandoned refineries were found by another army patrol.

The paper said the refineries were uncovered between March 23 and April 7.



Indonesian riot police clash with University in Jatinangor. At least denounce the government and P

Indonesian warnings a

JAKARTA (AFP) — Thousands of Indonesian students have shrugged off repeated warnings from the authorities against keeping up protest rallies across the country, as 15 more people were hurt in a clash in Jat... reports said Wednesday.

And their ranks are being swelled by increasing numbers of people demanding urgent economic and political reforms since the almost daily rallies started in February.

Tuesday students and army forces clashed, injuring seven students and a security staff injured in fighting outside Bandung Islamic University in West Java as the authorities tried to stop students from marching on the streets, the report said.

The clash in Bandung, 180 kilometres east of Jakarta, followed a gathering of up to 1,000 students from various universities at the Islamic University, the Kompas daily said.

About 2,000 students also gathered at the Bandung Institute of Technology for an anti-violence demonstration.

Sri Lanka prosecutio

COLOMBO (AFP) — A high-powered panel in Sri Lanka has found that 16 out the 765 people reported missing in the island's embattled northern Jaffna Peninsula have been killed, the government said Wednesday.

A five-member team investigating disappearances of minority Tamils following the military's capture of the Jaffna Peninsula from Tamil Tiger rebels in December 1995 recommended several prosecutions.

"The number of people alleged to have been killed after arrest was 16," the panel said in a report to President

Riot polic of Zimba

HARARE (AFP) — Hundreds of riot police in full anti-riot gear were deployed Wednesday ahead of a planned march in Zimbabwe's capital Harare by students protesting against the privatisation of campus services.

Scores of heavily armed police sealed off the country's main University of Zimbabwe, while many others were posted along main roads leading from the campus into the city centre.

The ... Park, Africa ... where ... into Lake ... oil in the ... pic found.

"Workers ... boycotting ... to oppose ... Valuation ... dation and ... department ... campus ... About ... live on ...



Indonesian riot police clash with thousands of students gathered from five West Java universities, at Padjadjaran University in Jatinangor. At least 23 students were injured in the clashes as students across the country continue to denounce the government and President Suharto, who they blame for the current economic crisis (Reuters photo)

Indonesian students brush off warnings against keeping up rallies

JAKARTA (AFP) — Thousands of Indonesian students have shrugged off repeated warnings from the authorities against keeping up protest rallies across the country, as 13 more people were hurt in a clash in Java, reports said Wednesday.

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In the East Java provincial capital of Surabaya, about 1,000 women were allowed after much haggling to march briefly in the streets from the Airlangga University, Kompas said.

The group which included students, lecturers as well as Catholic nuns, nurses, housewives, factory workers and even a number of prostitutes, demanded urgent reforms and lower prices of essential goods, the Jakarta Post said.

"We women were among the first to suffer from the crisis. The price of milk for our children increased, even sanitary napkins are more expensive now," one activist was quoted as saying by the daily.

Women dominated many of the rallies Tuesday as the day coincided with the local heroine day commemorating the birth of national hero Raden Ajeng Kartini, a pioneer for women's rights at the turn of the century.

Demonstrations, predominantly attended by women, were also held at Jakarta's Pancasila University, at the Indonesia Institute of Technology in nearby Serpong, West Java, and at the Hasanuddin University in Ujungpandang, South Sulawesi.

Kompas said female lecturers and wives of civil servants joined some 10,000 students demonstrating at the state Gajah Mada University in the central Javan town of Yogyakarta Tuesday.

Thousands of students in the capital also gathered at Mercu Buana University, owned by President Suharto's half-brother Probosutedjo, at Sahid University and at the Jayabaya University.

Fifteen students, frustrated by Home Affairs Minister Hartono's refusal to give them a straight answer during a government-sponsored meeting with students here Tuesday, walked out.

"We want you, sir, to give direct and concrete answers," the Media Indonesia daily quoted a student from South Sulawesi's provincial capital of Ujungpandang, Ilham, as saying.

"It is better that you hear my explanations out first. Do not just interrupt," said the minister.

Thousands of students from dozens of universities have rejected state-sponsored talks, the first of which were held with 15 cabinet ministers last weekend, and expressed doubt about the government's sincerity in carrying out sweeping reforms.

In Surabaya, some 500 members of the Indonesian Muslim Students Movement gathered at the Sunan Ampel Islamic Institute to perform a mock funeral prayer for what they said was the demise of President Suharto's three decades of rule.

Mr. Suharto came to power in 1966 after founding President Sukarno gave him full power to reestablish order following a coup attempt the previous year.

Mr. Suharto became acting president in 1967 and president the following year. In March he was reappointed to a seventh five-year term.

Japan Communists call for anti-Hashimoto coalition

TOKYO (R) — A senior member of the Japan Communist Party (JCP) said Wednesday his party was willing to join forces temporarily with other opposition parties to topple Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto's government.

As new opinion polls showed Mr. Hashimoto's popularity falling to a record low since his election in 1996, Kazuo Shii, head of the JCP secretariat and number two in the party, said the prime minister had mismanaged the economy and must go.

"The Japan Communist party is strongly demanding that Prime Minister Hashimoto step down and that the lower house (of parliament) be dissolved immediately to pave the way for general elections," Mr. Shii said.

His call came amid mounting attacks on the prime minister from the media, big business and the opposition for his handling of the economy.

Separate polls published Wednesday by three major news organisations — the Yomiuri Shimbun, Kyodo and the Tokyo Shimbun — all showed the prime minister's support falling by several percentage points to a record low in the past month.

Kyodo and the Tokyo Shimbun put his support at 37.1 per cent while the Yomiuri poll showed support of only 31 per cent.

The polls gave Mr. Hashimoto's administration low marks on leadership, handling of the economy, and trustworthiness.

To counter the ruling liberal democratic party's economic recovery package that is heavy on public works projects and temporary tax cuts, Mr. Shii had a sweeping alternative plan.

The key to reviving the economy, he said, was a cut in the consumption tax to three per cent from the current five per cent.

"I believe opposition parties should get together and unite to press the government to reduce the consumption tax rate as an immediate way of stimulating the economy," Mr. Shii told reporters.

He said reducing the consumption tax back to the three per cent it was until April 1997 would effectively generate five trillion yen ($38.1 billion) in consumer spending.

"It'll have enormous effects in restoring consumer confidence," Mr. Shii said. "And unlike the income tax cut that the prime minister introduced, this would not go into savings."

Mr. Shii was referring to four trillion yen in income and other tax cuts recently announced by Mr. Hashimoto.

The Communist blueprint for recovery calls for a rollback in health fees and for emergency loans for small- and medium-sized firms to tide them over a current liquidity crunch crisis.

The JCP, once a far left fringe group, has moderated many of its policies since the end of the cold war and doubled the number of its seats to 26 in 1996 lower house polls that elected Mr. Hashimoto's LDP.

In the decisive 500-seat lower house, the LDP has 261 seats with the next biggest grouping an alliance of the democratic party, the good governance party, the amity party and the democratic reform party with 96 seats.

Other seats are spread among splintered opposition groups.

"We have considerable differences, but in the current political circumstances, we would like to build a coalition with opposition parties in order to drive the Hashimoto government to resign, dissolve parliament and hold general elections," Mr. Shii said.

Under the current schedule, upper house elections are planned for July and lower house polls are not due until 2000.

U.N. prosecutor 'persuaded' Karadzic will get to trial

SARAJEVO (AFP) — The chief prosecutor of the U.N.'s war crimes tribunal said Wednesday she was "absolutely persuaded" that Radovan Karadzic will go to The Hague for trial, and hopefully by the end of this month.

"I am absolutely persuaded, and I think there's every bit of evidence to suggest, that Mr. Karadzic will be tried in The Hague," said Louise Arbour of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY).

She added that she "passionately shared" High Representative Carlos Westendorp's wish to see the Bosnian Serb wartime leader — twice indicted for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide — sent to The Hague, where the ICTY is based, by the end of this month.

Ms. Arbour has been in Bosnia-Herzegovina for three days, notably meeting officials in the Serb entity of Republika Srpska and inspecting a mass grave site near Srebrenica, scene of the worst massacre of the 1992-95 war.

The Canadian judge also withdrew an attack she made earlier this year on France, whose NATO contingent she accused of failing to catch war crimes suspects in areas of Bosnia they oversee which includes Mr. Karadzic's Pale stronghold just east of Sarajevo.

"I no longer have any basis to be particularly alarmed with respect to the level of cooperation we can expect from France in every respect," she told a press conference.

Serbian security force build-up in western Kosovo

PRISTINA, Yugoslavia (AFP) — Substantial Serbian security forces were deployed in western Kosovo Wednesday, local Albanian sources said, prompting fears that an assault on nearby villages was imminent.

The Albanian-run Kosovo Information Centre (KIC) said that an army convoy drove through the town of Decani Wednesday at 7:30 a.m. local time (0530 GMT) and continued towards a village called Babaloc.

Quoting sources from the province's main Albanian party, the Kosovo Democratic League (LDK), the information centre said that Serbian police set up check-points in the village Wednesday.

"Serbian authorities are continuing its preparations for a massive attack against villages around Decani," some 70 kilometres west of the provincial capital Pristina, the KIC said.

The KIC said the villages around Decani have an almost exclusively Albanian population "after Serb inhabitants left the region under the orders of the regime." Babaloc has 1,600 Albanians.

Tuesday, Yugoslav army troops moved into the area and south of Pec, 20 kilometres north of Decani, soldiers have dug in positions, local Albanian and Serbian sources said.

Last month Serbian security units mounted a major crackdown on suspected Albanian separatists, killing at least 80 people including many women and children.

The operation was prompted by a series of attacks on Serbian police and other targets in the Serbian province and claimed by a shadowy armed Albanian group, the Kosovo Liberation Army.

Kosovo's ethnic Albanian majority is demanding independence from Belgrade, or for an upgraded state of autonomy equal to the republic status of Serbia and Montenegro, which now make the federal Yugoslavia. Belgrade revoked Kosovo's autonomy in 1989.

This latest reported build-up might be in response to a series of incidents in the area which borders neighbouring Albania. Official Serb sources have reported exchanges of fire between Yugoslav troops and Albanian "terrorists" allegedly smuggling weapons over the border, and an attack on a refugee camp in the area sheltering Serb families who left Albania in the early 1990s.

Over the weekend, Serbian officials said the camp in which 123 Serb families live was attacked by an armed group, though no injuries were reported.

Albanian officials did not confirm the report but said that Albanians in the area were "seeking ways to organise themselves in the face of a possible Serb attack."

Belgrade has come under international pressure to open a dialogue with leaders of Kosovo's ethnic Albanians in an effort to avert what some fear could be another Balkan conflict that might drug in neighbouring countries.

Sri Lanka panel orders prosecutions after rights probe

COLOMBO (AFP) — A high-powered panel in Sri Lanka has found that 16 out the 765 people reported missing in the island's embattled northern Jaffna Peninsula have been killed, the government said Wednesday.

A five-member team investigating disappearances of minority Tamils following the military's capture of the Jaffna Peninsula from Tamil Tiger rebels in December 1995 recommended several prosecutions.

"The number of people alleged to have been killed after arrest was 16," the panel said in a report to President Chandrika Kumaratunga who appointed them in November 1996 amid international criticism of rights abuses.

The panel received 2,621 complaints of disappearances relating to the cases of 765 men and women out of which 201 people were traced as either having been released or remanded in custody.

The team had 30 sittings in Jaffna receiving evidence from civilians, non-governmental organisation and members of parliament. It was the first such hearing in Jaffna since the security forces captured the region from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

The panel recommended that police investigate 25 cases with a view to prosecute the offenders while another 134 complaints needed further probing to identify the culprits.

The one-page summary released by the government Wednesday did not identify the persons to be prosecuted but officials said members of the security forces and police were likely to be named in a final report.

The panel also found there was insufficient evidence to proceed investigating 219 complaints.

Cases relating to the disappearances of 145 people could not be investigated as complainants did not respond to a summons to give evidence and in the cases of the remaining 25 the letters sent to complainants were returned due to incorrect addresses, the panel said.

The U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Bill Richardson, who visited Colombo last week said much needed to be done to protect human rights in Sri Lanka but he was convinced the situation was improving.

Riot police deploy in force ahead of Zimbabwe student protests

HARARE (AFP) — Hundreds of riot police in full anti-riot gear were deployed Wednesday ahead of a planned march in Zimbabwe's capital Harare by students protesting against the privatisation of campus services.

Scores of heavily armed police sealed off the country's main University of Zimbabwe, while many others were posted along main roads leading from the campus into the city centre.

The main and central park, Africa Unity Square, where most protest gatherings take place, was closed off to the public, local people found.

"Workers and students are boycotting work and classes in opposition to the privatisation of the accommodation and catering services department," a source at the campus told AFP.

About 8,000 students who live on campus, together with some 600 university staff, were holding a meeting Wednesday morning.

University sources expressed fear that the privatisation of the accommodation and catering department would lead to a price hike, without necessarily bringing any improvement in services.

Moreover, rumours making the rounds of the campus held that the tender to run the department may be awarded to a company owned by the first lady, Grace Mugabe, wife of President Robert Mugabe.

Although the department has not been efficient, there has been strong resistance by students and workers to the proposal that it should be run by a private company, but university authorities are fording ahead with such a plan, due to come into effect in August.

One source said that opponents of privatisation would prefer that the affected service "continue to be run by the university, but (authorities should) improve on the management and stop the pilfering, and negotiate with suppliers for competitive prices of food and other materials needed."

President Robert Mugabe's government has this year faced several social protests over economic policies and hardship, some of which have led to bloodshed.

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special line from Aqaba to Eilat .



Departure from Amman :

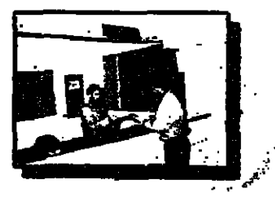
Amman - Tel Aviv	7:00 am.
Amman - Nazareth - Haifa	7:45 am.

Departure from Irbid :

Irbid - Nazareth & Haifa	9:15 am.

Departure from Tel Aviv :

Tel Aviv - Amman & Irbid	2:30 pm.
Haifa - Amman & Irbid	2:15 pm.
Nazareth - Amman & Irbid	3:45 pm.



Departure Stations :

Tel Aviv : Central Station - 4th Floor
Haifa : Nazareth Transport & Tourism Co.
Nazareth : Nazareth Transport & Tourism Co.
Amman : 7th Circle, near the Royal Jordanian City Terminal (1).
Irbid : Trust Co. Office, Infront of Irbid Mayor



Booking : 813427 / 813428
Irbid Branch : 02-251878
Sheik Hussein Bridge Branch : 07984257

Prefix Graphics

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation Established 1975

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Editor-in-Chief:
GEORGE S. HAWATMEH

Editorial and advertising offices:
Jordan Press Foundation,
University Road, P.O. Box 6710, Amman, Jordan.
Telephones: **5684311, 5699634, 5667171, 5603585**
Facsimile: **5696183**
E-mail: jotimes@go.com.jo
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Contradicting signals

AT A time of increased hope following British Prime Minister Tony Blair's invitation to host talks between Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu in London next month with the aim of breaking the 15-month impasse in the peace process, the Israeli leader is busy wooing Moledet, an extremist right-wing party, to join his government.

The political and ideological platform of Moledet, which is based on the rejection of any withdrawal from what it considers Eretz Israel, is familiar to all. The party is also known for its notorious call for the expulsion of all Arabs from historical Palestine. There is no doubt that such an extremist party would not join the Netanyahu government without extricating a price from him including a faithful and iron-clad commitment to its own ideological objectives. Under this pessimistic scenario, Netanyahu's hands would be further tied and he would not be able to deliver anything on May 4, when the London meeting is scheduled to take place.

Bringing Moledet into his coalition government does not tally with Netanyahu's contention that he has to rein in all the ultra-religious and hard line parties already in his government before he agrees to the projected Israeli redeployment and the final status talks. The Israeli leader struck a note of optimism at the conclusion of his talks with his British counterpart this week when he said that while he did not want to raise expectations about the London peace talks, "we all want to surprise ourselves and the world." Joining hands with Moledet is certainly a surprise, though not a pleasant one.

Just a few days ago, Netanyahu said he would "go anywhere" for a breakthrough with Palestinians. Sounding so desperate to end the stalemate in the peace process is at odds with joining forces with Moledet. There is an inherent contradiction in Netanyahu's purported commitment to making peace with the Palestinians (and indeed all Arabs), and signing a deal with Moledet. How Netanyahu plans to carry out the overdue second troop withdrawal from the West Bank with an added right-wing group on board is beyond comprehension.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Ibrahim Absi Wednesday was pessimistic about the upcoming meeting in London between the Israelis and the Palestinians under British sponsorship saying that it will not bear any fruit. What can a meeting in London achieve away from the occupied territories and from the problems that have been irking the world community, asked the writer. Benyamin Netanyahu has perhaps suggested the London meeting in May as a way to escape the requirements of peace and as a way to delay the implementation of the Oslo Accords, added the writer. It is regrettable to see Netanyahu once again able to deceive the world and to hoodwink the Europeans and the Americans into believing that he is oriented towards peace. Absi said. It is regrettable, he added, to see the Americans, the Europeans and the world community at large trusting Netanyahu and putting faith in his lies at a time when they realise that the man is insincere and will not respond to the Palestinians' demands as provided for in the Oslo agreement concerning the release of Palestinians, redeployment of the Israeli forces and allowing the Palestinians to open the airport and the sea port of Gaza among other requirements for the attainment of peace.

Al Dustour's Mohammad Daoud commented on the numerous conferences, seminars and other meetings being held in Jordan saying that the country has become saturated with such meetings but little is done to put their recommendations and resolutions into practice. The aim of any meeting, he said, is to reach consensus on solutions before they can be applied to help solve an existing problem. For instance, much has been said about crime and perhaps more seminars and conferences will be held to discuss the causes of crime which have been on the increase lately in Jordan, noted the writer. He said participants in such conferences are certain to attribute a great deal of the crimes to economic and social unrest, unemployment, economic recession, poverty and the presence of non-Jordanian workers in the Kingdom. But what is important for the public, Absi stressed, is to see the government heeding the resolutions and the recommendations of such meetings and coming up with proper mechanisms to deal with the chronic issue.

View from Academia

Dr. Ahmad Y. Majdoubeh

Influencing emerging global governance

I HAD both the pleasure and honour a couple of days ago to attend a round-table discussion held on the campus of the University of Jordan (UJ) on the important question of Gorbachev's compelling (though obvious enough) assertions that since globalisation (a process which is potentially positive, in his view) is inevitable, the big challenge (for everyone) is to have an impact on the shape of things, rather than go with the flow, thus preventing certain world powers from reaping the advantages for themselves. There is a need to think of positive, effective ways of influencing the emerging global governance.

The Jordanian panelists had a good deal to say, and intelligently, both about the challenges and threats posed by the new era as well as about what needs to be done (though more was said about the former than the latter). The basic assumption is that we as Jordanians, Arabs and Muslims have no problem in principle with globalisation. As Professor Farhan (a Muslim thinker) stressed, globalisation and Islam go hand in hand. He cited the famous verse in the Koran which stresses that all "mankind" is the offspring of one father and mother but (though brothers and sisters) are nonetheless diverse; the verse calls on them to become acquainted (and to live and let live, one may add). This is the bottom-line idea in globalisation. The problem we have is with the precise form and structure of the new world order.

While all welcomed the idea of a global order based on equity, justice, and respect of the roles and rights of all, many reservations were voiced, mainly about the potential hegemony of Western powers, especially the U.S. Many cannot but see the emerging order as unipolar. There are serious fears regarding the lot of smaller nations, regarding the erosion of indigenous cultures as a result of the fast-spreading Western values, regarding the threat posed by communication technologies (which are disseminators of Western values), regarding the widening gap between the haves and have-nots, etc.

The dialogue, in the opinion of all attending, was both important and fruitful, though ways and means of pursuing it further (as some participants demanded) need to be worked out.

The importance of the timely seminar (it could not have come at a better time indeed) goes way beyond what went on in it. The new millennium is fast approaching, globalisation is happening already, and we seem already to be in the new era. The question is: Are we prepared? What have we done?

It became apparent from the seminar, and (more generally) from what we say about the subject in our daily conversations and from what we read and hear in the media, that we in this part of the world need to urgently answer two questions (for other nations have either already answered them or are working hard on answers): A) Can we actually play a role in the new era? B) How do we get involved?

We, it seems, need to answer the first question first. Even though the question may not seem to some (many?) like a serious question, it in fact is. Like it or not, there are in our part of the world serious reservations and much scepticism, doubt, cynicism, and even fear of getting involved. Some (especially when you talk to them heart to heart) feel that we have no chance competing or making an impact. We are too weak and the "others" (whatever that means) are too strong. While I personally happen to disagree with those who hold these opinions, I happen to think at the same time that such scepticism, cynicism, and fear need to be confronted and answered, if not to convince those who hold such opinions of the need for them to lay them aside and themselves get involved at least to prevent them from influencing others with such harmful notions.

Having said that, however, I would also say that some of the scepticism, doubt, and fear is potent, legitimate and valid and needs to be addressed. We cannot even hope to make it in the days to come unless and until we have true confidence and faith in ourselves and in our abilities. And we cannot have such confidence and faith unless and until we are a hundred per cent (well, maybe 80%) clear, coherent, and deeply convinced of our ability to compete, excel or thrive. We need a lot of brainstorming (now more than later) regarding this very matter.

One matter, in particular, needs to be thoroughly debated also: namely, the unipolarity of the upcoming era. Many fear (and the fear is based on experiences from the old world order, which is not yet exactly behind us, and on recent political, economic, and cultural examples) that since there is only one global superpower, the new world order will be unavoidably dominated by it and by its allies. The world is Darwinian, and big fish eat small fish.

While I personally have faith in the ability of smaller nations to survive and thrive (IF, of course, they pull their act together, confront the obstacles that obstruct their development and progress, and get down to serious preparations for the times to come) and while I think we can capitalise a little on the humanistic elements within the big powers themselves (not all institutions and individuals in big powers think the way some chauvinistic elements in their governing bodies think), I feel that both a) the enlightened among us (the knowledgeable as well as the faithful), b) our partners in the days to come, and c) the USA and other Western powers have to help us come to terms with these serious doubts and fears. The U.S., especially, is called upon to devote more attention, take more seriously, and be more open-minded to reservations about its role or criticisms of it. Those who have doubts, fears or criticisms of the U.S. role do not necessarily hate America. Persuasive confidence-building measures regarding America's seriousness in wanting to be a partner, and not a dominator, must be encouraged.

Most of our efforts, and again now more than later, should be devoted to answering the second question: namely, how do we get involved? The said seminar, our formal and informal discussions, our library literature, etc. reveal clearly that we have not yet come up with a precise programme or strategy as to how we envision our participation, lot, or role in the new order. But the said seminar and what we read and hear about reveal clearly that other nations have either crystallised a strategy or are already deeply engaged in crystallising one. I know, of course, that working out a strategy for the new era is not like writing a drug prescription or drafting a fund-raising proposal. It is a huge task. But I also know that we need to get down to business.

The first thing we need to do is devote more time to thinking constructively than to complaining and feeling sorry for ourselves. To do our homework well, it seems to me, we in Jordan need to think along three lines at least.

First, at the national level, we are indeed heartened to know that our leadership is fully aware of the challenges as well as opportunities of globalisation. His Majesty King Hussein has done much already by boosting Jordan's image abroad and making the country known at the global level; HRH Crown Prince Hassan has been devoting a great deal of thinking, time, and effort to globalisation. Many high-ranking Jordanian officials and intellectuals are also aware of the challenges involved and of the need to do something. What is needed now is to stimulate, provoke, and encourage the country's institutions to come up with precise ideas, proposals, and strategies to complement and augment what the leadership is already doing. We need to come up with a national strategy based on the contribution of the country's experts.

Secondly, at the Arab level, something serious needs to be done. Two things must be stated here. The new world-order is going to be rough for small countries, which plan to participate alone (the big fish, small fish metaphor). What this means is that smaller countries need to think of alliances and mergers of sorts. For us in the Arab World, the immediate formula is the Arab nation. We Jordanians think of ourselves as Arabs, and all other Arab countries need each other, if they are to make an impact in the Darwinian world of globalisation. We realise, of course, that things have not exactly been milk and honey, but we have to make the Arab World involved if we want to survive. The magical formula for making things work at the Arab level, as I and others have said time and again, is co-ordination. The Arab World needs to start co-ordinating efforts. While Arab Nationalism has not done much for us in the twentieth century, let's hope (for the sake of all) that it does something at the humble, down-to-earth level of co-ordination in the twenty-first. We owe the Arab nation that much, and the Arab nation owes us that much.

Thirdly, we in Jordan also think of ourselves as part and parcel of the Islamic World, a world which is rich in natural and human resources (just as the case with the Arab World). Not only does Islam (as illustrated above) not reject the idea of globalisation, but Islam is in fact built on it. During the seminar's lunch break, I had the pleasure of sitting next to two historians. I asked them the question of whether globalisation is a new phenomenon in human history. The answer came, promptly and immediately: No. Alexander the Great had a global order. But the concept was also clearly manifested in the good old days of Islam. The Islamic state, in the opinion of the two highly-esteemed professors of history, incarnates fully the ideas of globalisation. Uniformity and diversity were nicely balanced in the Islamic state, at all levels: social, ethnic, economic, linguistic, cultural, theological levels. The man of literature sitting to my left and the professor of education sitting opposite me agreed fully. If this is the case, and I believe it is, modern-day Islam needs to come up with a specific programme and a strategy. The benefit here is dual, not only will the Islamic World benefit from the global order, but also the global order will benefit from Islam. The Gorbachev Foundation members all emphasised the need for the spirituality, moderation, and the great values of the East. Well, Islam (which has balanced spirituality and materialism, individuality and altruism, frugality and consumerism, very neatly and nicely) has a lot to offer at this level. Maybe this is also one way through which we can get rid of Islamophobia once and for all, and have the true values and image of Islam prevail.

Above all, and for the time being, we may want to start with creating a forum of some sorts (a group of specialists, such as in the case of the Gorbachev Foundation) whose sole job is to think, plan, and prepare for our involvement in the new global era. We should not let the momentum of discussion evoked by the visit and seminars of the Gorbachev Foundation members go with the wind.

Palestine National Council responds to U.S. senator

The following is a letter written by Palestine National Council Foreign Relations Committee member Bassam Abu Sherif to U.S. Senator Connie Mack, one of 81 senators who on an appeal from the American Israel Public Affairs Committee wrote to President Bill Clinton, asking him to keep from making public any U.S. peace proposals. Mr. Abu Sherif's letter, a copy of which was made available to the Jordan Times, was dated April 19, 1998.

Dear Senator Mack:

I HAVE recently received a copy of your letter of the third of April addressed to President Clinton.

I must correct certain factual errors contained in the letter. Most importantly, the issue of territory returned to Palestine by Israel.

You say in your letter that 27 per cent of the West Bank — where 98 per cent of the Palestinians live — and "virtually all" of Gaza has been returned to Palestinian control. That is not correct.

The portion of the West Bank under exclusive Palestinian control is 2.7 per cent of the occupied West Bank. The 27 per cent you refer to is a total percentile, inclusive of the West Bank territory which has now come under joint Israeli/Palestinian control. That territory is not under the exclusive control of the Palestine National Authority (PNA). Nor has it been ceded to the Palestinian Authority in keeping with the Oslo Accords.

(That figure does not include Jewish settlement areas in Gaza and the West Bank).

You are however correct in saying that the Oslo Accords are premised on the idea of "Land for Peace." That is the core bargain, the central understanding.

And in truth that has not been realised. The Palestinian people have not had the land that was promised returned.

At this juncture in the peace process there would have been three additional redistributions of Palestinian land. That has been halted. And it has been halted by the Israeli government in defiance of the Oslo agreements.

If you are to fault the lack of movement in the peace process I suggest you begin there. I would remind you that the prime minister of Israel was elected to office with a promise to end the peace process.

I suggest you read the interview published last week in the Israeli newspaper Ha'aretz with Israeli defence minister, Yitzhak Mordechai.

Mr. Mordechai is explicit in his denunciation of the Oslo accords. I quote "none of us including myself, likes the Oslo agreement and the way it was arrived at."

Mr. Mordechai continues in the interview to insist on particular revisions of the accords in keeping with what he describes as Israel's "security needs."

What the security needs are, remain obscure. In our view it simply permits a series of arbitrary conditions designed to finally compromise the spirit and letter of the agreements.

You insist that we repeatedly threaten a renewal of violence. We do not, and have not. We have repeatedly said that the Palestinian people want only the agreements to be honoured, the bargain kept.

It is ludicrous to suggest that we are able to withhold full security agreements with Israel. We are a people whose land is occupied by the Israeli Army. We are surrounded by the Israeli Army.

I should remind you that Palestine has no air force, no army, no navy, no atomic weapons.

We have only the will of a people who wish to live in freedom and in peace with their neighbours, in their own land.

You seem to suggest that Israel is most willing, nearly anxious, to return more land to Palestine governance. We welcome that, but no such offer has come to our attention of late.

I would differ with your understanding of the peace process. President Arafat signed the accords, together with the late Prime Minister Rabin, and Shimon Peres, in the presence of President Clinton at the White House in Washington.

He did so openly, and publicly. It was not a secret, the world was a witness. And we have proceeded, until now, openly and publicly with the peace process.

We do not find the search for peace to require duplicity or secrecy. We are most comfortable allowing the world as witness. We have nothing to hide.

To propose that the president of the United States undertakes his efforts for this noble cause in secrecy, and shadow, so as to protect Israel's security is to suggest that he cannot be trusted.

If, as you suggest, the Israeli government has been generous in its dealings with the Palestinians, I can see no reason why they should be reticent as not to allow the world the opportunity to cheer that generous spirit.

We are building a new state. One founded on the principles of democracy. We insist that the government we are building embrace fully the cherished democratic ideals of the United States.

And we fully believe that a fundamental promise of an informed citizenry is vital to that democracy. As I am sure you do. I am certain that you would not wish to have the people of the United States, who have pledged their support and devoted their energies to the cause for peace, to be excluded from so vital an undertaking.

The Palestinian people welcome the guidance and wisdom of the president. And we have full confidence in his ability. And we insist on an open and public forum so as not to compromise any interest.

Let me extend an invitation to you and any of your colleagues who would care to join you, to visit Palestine. We would be most grateful for the opportunity to allow you and others concerned with the peace process, to form a better understanding of our struggle for peace.

I would suggest, before you come, that you see a tape of the Israeli television broadcast, "Tkuma" or Rebirth. This documentary tells the whole truth of the birth of the State of Israel. The film will help you understand the violence done to the Palestinian people and the legacy of distrust and outrage we have borne for so many years.

The Israeli people have the courage to face the truth. At least a great many do. And no honest peace can be attained without the courage to accept the truth. We hope that you and your colleagues are as courageous as they.

LETTERS

There was no bid

To the editor:

REFERENCE IS made to your article "16 Firms bid to operate Aqaba railway franchise" (Jordan Times, April 22.). There are quite a few misstatements, and as one of the interested concessionaires, we would like to take this opportunity to clarify them to the Jordan Times' readers.

The headline is a misstatement for the following reasons:

- No actual bids were made. The event held in Amman Tuesday was an invitation for interested consortia/companies to participate in the candidates' conference and familiarisation visits to the various ARC related entities and facilities.
- The actual number of consortia that do participate in the presentation of technical proposals remains unknown to date.
- The Aqaba Railways is not a "franchise" but a concession.

The article refers to "50 foreign investors" as attending the event, and this is also incorrect and misleading. The number of pre-qualified consortia to the bid was 16 groups. Of the 16 groups only 13 attended the above conference and 7 of the groups included Jordanian members of the consortia and one group (ours) was Jordanian-led.

Another blatant error in the article was the statement: "the winner company will also construct two extensions of the railway from the Shidiya mines to the Yamania-Tetten industrial area near Aqaba and another from the port down to the industrial complex about 16 kilometres south of Aqaba city."

The extensions/links that require construction are in actual fact:

- Eshidiya mine site to Batn Al Ghul station at which point the new extension would link up with the existing ARC track, and
- The Wadi II (Yemania-Tetten) link that would connect the existing ARC track at the phosphate unloading terminal inside the port to the industrial area at the southern most point in Aqaba.

Kim Fuad Abujaber
Farradj and Co. Plc,
Fuad Abujaber and Sons

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any issue they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld upon request but only under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing and abridging.

This W

Sea

WHEN THE ... throw a dinner ... society on the ... Tuesday evening ... hosted by ... Bernard ... occasion of the ... Minister ... Michele ... Jordan, ... ending to the ... equation's ... guest list ... ernment and ... ter tourism ... from Jordan ... French ... and local ... journalists. ... Democratic ... earlier ... Majesties King ... and Queen ... addressed the ... of about ... and her ... their visit ... lege, the trip ... Dana, and ... French hotel ... new hotel ... Marriott which ... ing her ... eventually ... suffer than ... Then came ... success of ... don, and received ... cadets and the ... But Mr Bilal ... made use of ... pre-dinner ... his colleagues ... he finds himself ...

Gate's big s
ER

By Jean-C laude

THE DREADED ... gramme had crashed ... during the live presentat ... Windows 98. The event ... TV viewers on Tuesday ... Chairman Bill Gates and ... closely explaining how ... down was compared to the ... satellite TV channels could ... this most unusual news ... embarrassment on the faces ... amusing.

First I smiled. For ... times convincing our clients ... one of its application ... stops working, forcing the ... reset and start over. It is because ... not because of the machine ... crash of Windows98, before ... and therefore PC users, had ... revenge.

The promotional campaign ... be less prone to crash than Win ... admission that the latter ... crash of Win98 — albeit during ... — was another confirmation that ... not going to be absolutely crash ...

Internet Relay Ch
bu

By Ahmed Naser
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Hundreds of Jordanian youth are spending hours each day chatting on-line with "virtual friends" from across the globe and in the Kingdom that they have never met or what is known as Internet Relay Chat (IRC).

IRC, text-chat software, was developed by Khaled Mardam-Bey, an Egyptian, who first started distributing it on the Internet for free and later began offering it for an optional $25 registration fee.

The software has chat rooms that can be compared to live Bulletin Board Service conferences where chatters conduct live conversations, through instant messaging, an offshoot of e-mailing.

Operators, individuals who host the chat rooms on their computers or on Web space they rent out, moderate the content of the conversations in these rooms, "keeping an eye out for verbal abuse and harassment," said Basil Mr Obeidat, 22, an IRC "master" as his friends call him.

Mr. Obeidat, a computer science student employed as an Internet administrator at a Web establishment in Irbid, is a chat room operator and spends 6 hours a day on-line, in between chatting on IRC and browsing the World Wide Web.

Chatters who violate rules of conduct — set by a room operator — can be "kicked out" or even "banned" from the chat room, he told the Jordan Times.

Society on the move

Seasonal changes bring us to new avenues

WHEN THE French throw a dinner, that's society on the move! Tuesday evening's event, hosted by Ambassador Bernard Bajolet on the occasion of the visit of Minister of Tourism Michele Demessine to Jordan, was a festive ending to the French delegation's swift tour. The guest list included government and private sector tourism principals from Jordan and France, French embassy staff and local and French journalists. Madame Demessine, who was earlier received by Their Majesties King Hussein and Queen Noor, addressed the gathering of about 50 saying she and her accompanying delegation were delighted with their tour of the Ammoun Hospitality and Tourism College, the trip to Jerash, the helicopter visits to Petra and Dana, and the dip in the Dead Sea where ACCOR, the French hotel chains giant, is planning to build the third new hotel after the under construction Mövenpick and the Marriott which broke ground earlier this year. In thanking her Jordanian counterpart, Madame Demessine deferentially referred to him by first name, pronouncing Akel softer than he may be used to by his other colleagues. Then came Mr. Biltaji's turn to speak. He praised the success of tourism cooperation between France and Jordan, and invited "Michele" (said with a similar soft cadence) and the delegation again back to the Kingdom. But Mr. Biltaji, a man known to size up his surroundings, made use of the microphone to let the guests know that pre-dinner conversation drew him several job offers from his colleagues in the hotel industry, and in the event that he finds himself out of his current job any time soon, it just so happened that two of his former bosses were also seated at his table. Among the Jordanian invitees connected one way or another to the hospitality industry were Minister of Public Works Nasser Lawzi, Royal Jordanian President Nader Dahabi, head of Jordan Tourism Investment Company Ali Ghandour (who was the first president of Royal Jordanian), Jordan Tourism Board Director Marwan Khoury, Chairman of Arab International Hotels Nadim Muasher, Jordan Hoteliers Association President Michel Nazal, and Ammoun College Director Adnan Habboo. The evening also gave the Jordanian guests an opportunity to meet two new staff members of the embassy. They are Annie Douvinet, the new consul, who arrived from her last post in Germany, and Véronique Vouland-Aneini, the new head of the press office who arrived from Rome.



Michele Demessine

WHAT TO DO WITHOUT HIM? *The Council of Ministers last week regretfully accepted the resignation of Director General of the National Electricity Company Mohammad Said Arafeh, effective April 25. Mr. Arafeh, with 30 years of experience in the electric power industry, has wanted to resign for some time but has always been persuaded to stay on by his colleagues. This time however, the man who spent the last 15 years running NECO's predecessor, the Jordan Electricity Authority, then overseeing its commercialisation and finally taking the reigns of the nascent NECO, could not be dissuaded from his decision to take on a lighter load. At 63, Mr. Arafeh will be sorely missed by NECO's board members and employees. NECO will appoint someone as acting director general, pending the next move towards privatisation which will be a split of the company into three already registered companies: one for power generation, another for transmission, and another for distribution. Mr. Arafeh will take a long deserved R&R and perhaps be available for some consultations at a later stage.*

HELP ON THE WAY: *Today the government will sign a contract with an Egyptian investment bank that will advise the Jordan Investment Corporation on the partial sale of its shareholdings in the Jordan Cement Factories Company. The Egyptian concern has two leading partners of particular note who will be here in Amman to attend the signing ceremony between Minister of Finance Suleiman Hafez and Mohammad Temour, chairman of EFG-Hermes, as the investment bank is officially called. The two partners are brothers Hassan and Ahmad Heikel, sons of renowned Arab journalist Mohammad Hassanein Heikel. EFG-Hermes won the contract out of 10 leading international investment banks.*

HANDING OVER: *Senator Marwan Hmoud was appointed secretary general of the Parliamentary Committee for Africa and the Arab World, taking over the post vacated by former Deputy Samir Habashneh who opted not to run for another term during parliamentary elections last year. But Mr. Habashneh felt it was important to continue to have Jordan represented on this committee and at its meeting last month in Senegal, the members agreed to appoint another Jordanian parliamentarian to the post. The committee's aim is to improve the standard of living of the citizens of the representative countries from African and the Arab World.*

JTV AT 30: *Not just for your viewing entertainment, but perhaps a prize or two, new Jordan Radio and Television Corporation Director Nasser Judeh has a four-day television special lined up to celebrate JTV's 30th birthday. In tune with what Mr. Judeh promises to be a fresh and innovative phase at JTV, the programmes, to air from April 27-30, will feature quizzes with prizes and a look back at television with Ruba Assaf. Ms. Assaf has tapped the archives and called on several former television personalities from news presenters to show hosts to profile the people who contributed to JTV over the last three decades. Former news readers, you may be surprised to learn, include none other than former Minister of Information Samir Mutawi, who is said to be tipped for the post of Jordan's first ambassador to Holland, Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Akel Biltaji, and Royal Jordanian Public Relations Chief Munib Toukan, whose recognisable moustache, goatee and pipe will be missed around RJ with his approaching retirement. In addition, JTV has located the first face ever to appear on Channel Two; it belongs to Ghada Haddadin who will speak on the profile programme live from London. Other former television personalities include Najwa Halasa Karadsheh and Rima Alaeeddin. Lots more information is available on the JTV Website (JRTV.com) operated by Samer Farraj.*

FOR NGOs: *British Ambassador Christopher Battiscombe presented Dr. Sari Nasser, president of the Community Development Centres Society with a cheque in the amount of JD 10,559 as part of the British government's support for "a sheep and cow rearing project and a dairy production factory" in Rahma village. The project will seek to reduce poverty among residents of Rahma, which is located 50 kilometres to the north-west of Aqaba. The grants is part of the British government's annual donation of JD 250,000 for non-governmental organisations. Dr. Nasser, a professor of sociology at the University of Jordan, has been active for many years in community development projects aimed at the country's poverty pockets.*

FILM FANCY: *Swedish Ambassador Agneta Bohman hosted a lunch last week and will host a reception on Saturday on the occasion of the opening of the Scandinavian Film Week on Saturday for children. For information on the films and showing times, parents can call any one of the Scandinavian embassies or honorary consulates.*

TRAFFIC UNDER CONTROL: *At last Saturday's reception hosted by Ambassador Süha Umar and his wife Tuline for visiting Deputy Chief of the Turkish General Staff of the Armed Forces, the back-up of cars near the embassy residence was typical. But according to neighbours who were either driving in or out of their garages the uniformed officers charged with traffic management were dutifully polite and efficient in escorting them through the maze near the 2nd Circle. One officer even smiled and asked a long time resident of the neighbourhood, "Now what would you have done had we not been here?*

SHOP-AHOLICS GET READY: *Preparations for the Sweifiyeh Sales Festival are in full swing. Set to take place from June 29 to July 30, the organisers say the festival is meant to encourage trade and tourism. In fact, Faris Kawar, head of the festival committee, has said that the Dubai Shopping Festival, famous around the Arab World, was used as an example to follow. The Sweifiyeh commercial area will be closed off to vehicles throughout the festival: between Al Ameerah Taghreed Street, Abdul Rahim Al Haj Mohammad Street, Tariq Al Jindi Street and Salah Suheimat Street. Cooperating with Amman Municipality, the festival committee is working out how to provide adequate parking space close to the area of activity. Celebrations will be held every night with music for adults and children. Special theatres will be set up for these free activities, along with a mini circus, fireworks and laser shows. The organisers announced big discounts of 10-50 % off by the 600 participating shops in the area. Top lottery prizes include duty free cars.*

Jennifer Hamarneh

Gate's big screen flashes ERROR

chip talk



By Jean-Claude Elias

THE DREADED error message saying that the programme had crashed flashed on the computer's screen during the live presentation of the new, much awaited Windows98. The event was watched by tens of millions of TV viewers on Tuesday. A few seconds before, Microsoft Chairman Bill Gates and one of his assistants were precisely explaining how reliable the new version of Windows was compared to the current Windows95. Most satellite TV channels could not refrain from broadcasting this most unusual news clip later in the evening. The embarrassment on the faces of Gates and his assistant was amusing.

First I smiled. For we, computer professionals have hard times convincing our clients that often, when Windows or one of its application programmes crashes (suddenly stops working, forcing the user to perform a complete reset and start over) it is because of flaws in Windows and not because of the machine or something we did. The crash of Windows98, before a huge number of people, and therefore PC users, had the bittersweet taste of revenge.

The promotional campaign stressing that Win98 would be less prone to crash that Win95 was Microsoft's own admission that the latter wasn't fully reliable. The public crash of Win98 — albeit during a simple demonstration — was another confirmation that even the newcomer was not going to be absolutely crash proof. As it was written in this column a few weeks ago, the safest Windows to date remains the NT version.

System crash, embarrassments, smiles and revenge apart, nothing really is going to change for all users of Windows operating system. We will continue to acquire any new version that Microsoft very kindly, quite generously accepts to release and give us. Some of us will thank Mr. Gates for providing them with such a fine programme. Others will curse him — or envy his multibillion dollars bank account — whenever the system plays sudden death. But we will all continue to depend on Windows to conduct our business, surf the Internet, play games, make music, do our accounting, send faxes, type letters and consult the amazing data banks that have been built using computers.

In spite of the intermittent problems with Windows the game is still worth playing. Besides, what's the alternative? Would you stop driving your car just because there's always a risk of having an accident? Some will say Apple Macintosh personal computer is the answer. True, the Mac OS (Operating System) is more reliable than Windows. Other factors, however, give a clear advantage to Windows-based PCs: they are less expensive, there's a much wider range of software for them, there's also a larger customer base making it easier to communicate, etc. For the time being, and whatever its chief executive officer does in public — well, almost — Windows users will blindly follow Microsoft.

Internet Relay Chat offers border-free conversations, but 'no politics please'

By Ahmed Naser
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Hundreds of Jordanian youth are spending hours each day chatting on-line with "virtual friends" from across the globe and in the Kingdom that they have never met on what is known as Internet Relay Chat (IRC).

IRC, text-chat software, was developed by Khaled Mardam-Bey, an Egyptian, who first started distributing it on the Internet for free and later on began offering it for an optional $1 registration fee.

The software has chat rooms that can be compared to live Bulletin Board Service conferences where "chatters" conduct live conversations, through instant messaging, an offshoot of e-mailing.

Operators, individuals who host the chat rooms on their computers or on Web space they rent out, moderate the content of the conversations in these rooms, "keeping an eye out for verbal abuse and harassment," said Bara M. Obeidat, 22, an IRC "master" as his friends call him.

Mr. Obeidat, a computer science student employed as an Internet administrator at a Web establishment in Irbid, is a chat room operator and spends 6 - 8 hours a day on-line, in between chatting on IRC and browsing the World Wide Web.

Chatters who violate rules of conduct — set by a room operator — can be "kicked out" or even "banned" from the chat room, he told the Jordan Times.

"Electronically of course," added Mr. Obeidat, well-known by his "nick" X-Hail on IRC.

The majority of Web time sold through Internet cafés across the Kingdom is used on IRC, according to owners of more than 10 different digital surf spots scattered throughout the capital.

There are also another four Internet cafés in Irbid and two in Mafraq, with more expected to open in the coming few months.

What makes IRC attractive is its social and border-free nature, said Mr. Obeidat, as he chatted away with friends in Jordan and the United States.

"IRC is an obsession and addiction... where your only boundary is your imagination," he said, adding that "with IRC, you can travel anywhere and meet anyone."

Mr. Obeidat, for example, said he has made over 30 friends in the past six months through IRC and meets them regularly in Amman and Irbid.

He has even met some of his overseas friends who visited Jordan lately.

As such, IRC is not just chat software, but has evolved through use by millions of browsers around the world into a comprehensive society and culture with its own language, norms and terminology.

Phrases like "LOL" (laughing out loud) 10X (thanks) and BRB (be right back) shape the way that people, the majority of which are youth, communicate and bond quickly on IRC.

The difference between IRC and other communication cultures that preceded it is, that for example, Ham Radios (which took off in the 40s and 50s) and CB radios made famous by the movie "Cannonball Run" have always been physically constrained by broadcasting range.

IRC also employs symbols within its language such as ":>) and : > (," known as "smiley" and "angry" faces.

The language and symbols employed in IRC come from the long used Internet lingo known as "Lamerz."

Lamerz, which has been in use by Internet hobbyists from all over the world for the past 10 years, is an English slang term and bases its spelling on abbreviation and how something is pronounced.

On a more anthropological level, in the majority of chat rooms, politics is a "no-no" and most chat room operators will "kick out" and "ban" visitors who do not adhere to this unspoken and discrete code, said Mr. Obeidat.

The taboo on politics is something rooted in the culture of computer anarchists — who like to call themselves hackers, phreakers or lamerz depending on their digital talents — because they consider dabbling in politics "a destructive aspect of life."

With the growth of on-line cultures, earlier this year, a tournament was held in east Asia whereby Internet Service Providers and computer companies marketed their services and PCs by inviting thousands of youth to chat with celebrities on IRC.

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Exceptionally creative and commercial astute National Sales Manager, preferably Jordanian, fully conversant in Arabic and English, 30-40 years old, with a documented & successful route up in commercial operations.

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Applications

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Only serious applications will be considered.

Workshop to examine urban housing

AMMAN (Petra) — The Amman-based regional U.N. Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) is organising a four-day workshop in Amman starting on April 27 to tackle questions related to housing prospects and urban indicators in the Arab World.

The meeting, to be attended by 50 delegates from 16 Arab countries, will be hosted by the Housing and Urban Development Corporation (HUDC), which will offer technical support for training Arab personnel involved in this field.

HUDC Director General Yousef Hiyasat noted that the workshop is being held at a time when countries in the developing world lack the information about housing-related subjects needed to develop effective urban policies.

Most cities, especially those in the developing world, lack information about the manner in which they can address problems connected with housing and housing programmes, he said.

For this reason, Mr. Hiyasat added, Habitat has created a special "urban development programme" to provide indications on future expectations.

The upcoming workshop aims at training workers involved in urban development to prepare indicators and examine trends of urban housing in the Arab World and formulate the strategies needed at the local, national and regional levels, according to Mr. Hiyasat.

He said the delegates will discuss five urban indicators, focusing attention on socio-economic development, infrastructure, transport, ecology management and local government.

The countries represented in the coming meeting are: Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Palestine, Morocco, Iraq, Bahrain, Syria, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Sudan, Yemen, Mauritania, Egypt, Tunisia and Lebanon.

Seminar to discuss impact of stalemate in peace process on Jordan's tourism industry

AMMAN (J.T.) — The impact of the one-year stalemate in the peace process on Jordan's tourism industry will be among the issues to be tackled by a seminar on "Tourism in Jordan: Challenges and Future Perspectives," to be held next week at the Amman Private University (APU).

The two-day seminar, which is scheduled to be opened by Tourism Minister Akel Biltaji on Saturday, will also deal with the particular development needs of different kinds of tourism, such as medical, religious and sport tourism.

A score of speakers from local private and public sector institutions involved in tourism will "explore ways to best develop, promote and market Jordan's natural richesse," said Suleiman Lawzi, dean of the Faculty of Economics at APU.

"In the last few years, the number of Muslim tourists from Malaysia, Indonesia and Iran has sharply increased, highlighting the high potential of religious tourism to the Kingdom," Dr. Lawzi added.

More than 50 holy sites are scattered throughout the Kingdom.

Representatives from the Jordan Tourism Board, the ministries of planning, foreign affairs, and higher education, as well as the Royal Scientific Society, Royal Jordanian and private and public universities will present papers during the seminar.

GALLERIA

هاتف ٥٩٣٤٧٩٣ هاتف ٠٧٩ ٣٣٤٣٠



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forum hotels

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Rubin says World Bank must cut costs, raise income

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The World Bank must act quickly to cut its costs and increase its income if it is to have the financing to continue helping the neediest developing countries, U.S. Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin has said.

"We seek a more efficient bank, producing better results on the ground and at lower cost," Mr. Rubin told the IMF and World Bank Development Committee, which deals with transfer of funds from the world's rich to poor countries.

"There must be more selective use of Bank resources, with greater concentration on those activities which the bank does best," he said.

The bank's net income is falling because it is earning less on the loans it makes due to low interest rates.

Net income in the year to June 1997 totalled $1.28 billion, but in the six months to December it was only $449 million, less than half the previous full year's total.

In addition, Mr. Rubin said, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) should increase its loan charges because current rates, which are lower than those charged by regional development banks, are actually costing it money because they do not even cover administrative costs.

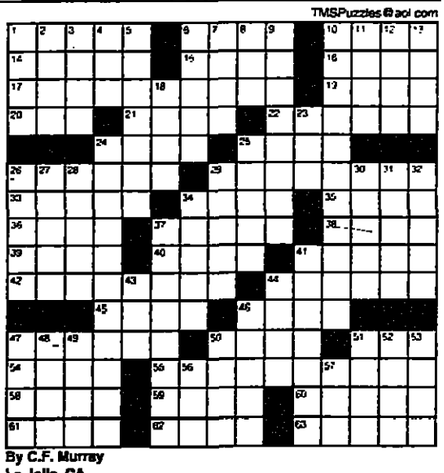
AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET
HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - SHMEISANI
TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607179
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR WEDENSDAY 22/04/1998

	PAST 12 MONTHS HIGH	LOW	COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DIV.	NO. OF TRANS.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE
	350.000	251.000	ARAB BANK	14.2	1.15	16	8420	2924470	345.00	348.00	3.00+
	2.340	1.660	JOR.NATIONAL BK.	14.3	3.98	7	2275	4004	1.79	1.76	.03-
S	3.540	1.250	BANK OF JORDAN	4.1	0.00	3	750	995	1.35	1.30	.05-
	5.990	4.660	THE HOUSING BK.	18.2	3.48	2	1500	8625	5.99	5.75	.24-
S	4.180	1.790	JOR.KUWAIT BANK	.9	0.00	7	22390	40754	1.83	1.84	.01+
	.920	.590	JOR.GULF BANK	4.0	10.45	8	5250	3528	.67	.67	-
S	4.190	2.600	ARAB JOR.INV.BK.	39.6	2.56	1	3000	7800	2.60	2.60	-
+N	2.700	2.650	ARAB JOR.INV.BK./NEW	P	0.00	1	1000	2600	2.65	2.60	.05-
S	4.020	1.750	JOR.ISLAMIC BANK	15.7	0.00	6	3500	6458	1.84	1.86	.02+
+S	3.900	1.750	JOR.INV.FIN.BANK	10.9	0.00	3	221	378	1.75	1.70	.05-
N	2.350	1.610	JOR.INV.FIN.BANK/NEW	E	0.00	1	50	82	1.62	1.63	.01+
	1.400	.800	BEIT.AL-MAL (BEITMA)	.6	16.85	6	1550	1368	.85	.89	.04+
	BANK SECTOR TOTALS		INDEX: 243.93	%CHG: -0.04		61	49906	3001060			
S	1.350	.900	ARABIAN SEAS INSUR.	9.1	0.00	4	125000	125000	1.04	1.00	.04-
	2.400	1.590	JOR FRENCH INSUR.	6.0	11.74	3	6250	13383	2.16	2.13	.03-
	INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS		INDEX: 122.12	%CHG: -0.32		7	131250	138383			
	2.240	1.550	JOR.ELECTRIC PWR.	10.6	5.07	21	9290	20133	2.18	2.17	.01-
	4.030	1.320	IRBID ELECTRICITY	14.6	4.24	1	150	354	2.25	2.36	.11+
	1.550	.960	NATL. PORTFOLIO	42.3	0.00	10	5900	6254	1.07	1.06	.01-
	.590	.360	JORDAN INTL.TRAD.	g	0.00	2	750	278	.37	.37	-
	1.480	1.120	MID. EAST HOTELS	17.4	0.00	5	38750	44175	1.18	1.14	.04-
	4.600	2.890	ARAB INTL.INV.EDUC.	10.1	1.98	12	100500	402100	4.20	4.05	.15-
	1.830	1.450	UNIFIED CO.	6.9	7.10	53	15450	23693	1.57	1.55	.02-
	SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS		INDEX: 117.69	%CHG: -1.11		104	170790	496986			
	1.160	.960	ATTAHQEEB	g	0.00	1	1200	1320	1.10	1.10	-
	4.450	2.690	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	16.7	3.91	20	10904	30800	2.89	2.81	.08-
	11.160	9.200	JOR. PETROL.REFINARY	10.7	8.08	27	18521	203492	10.95	11.00	.05+
	2.150	1.100	INDUSTRIAL COMM.AGR.	g	0.00	2	5000	6003	1.22	1.20	.02-
	7.350	5.800	JOR.WORSTED MILLS	8.3	3.16	1	10000	63200	6.32	6.32	-
	5.740	3.440	ARAB PHARM. MANF.	15.2	3.63	46	12285	68080	5.59	5.51	.08-
	8.540	5.000	ARAB CHEM. DTRGN.	21.6	4.29	1	100	700	7.33	7.00	.33-
	3.420	2.220	ARAB ALUM.IND.	21.2	8.71	9	3017	8644	2.86	2.87	.01+
	.570	.400	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	16.6	0.00	3	2800	1372	.49	.49	-
	1.110	.670	ARAB PAPER CONV.TRD.	23.2	0.00	1	250	190	.76	.76	-
	.770	.370	INTERMED.PETRO.CHEM.	g	0.00	31	35450	14182	.41	.40	.01-
	.690	.500	JOR. ROCKWOOL INDS.	P	0.00	1	100	54	.53	.54	.01+
	2.240	1.360	UNIV.CHEM.INDS.	14.7	5.56	10	1600	2320	1.43	1.44	.01+
S	3.000	.920	NATL.CABLE WIRE.MFAC	28.4	0.00	1	250	295	1.20	1.18	.02-
	.790	.530	JOR. SULPHO-CHEM	11.4	0.00	7	4000	2403	.61	.60	.01-
S	1.540	.810	UNIT. MODN.INDS.	14.0	6.82	9	2880	2555	.90	.88	.02-
	1.200	.680	JOR.INDS.RESOURCES	9.3	14.49	3	650	449	.69	.69	-
	1.080	.810	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	13.7	10.31	1	50	49	1.02	.97	.05-
	1.790	1.290	EL -EAY READY WEAR	48.2	0.00	2	600	822	1.40	1.37	.03-
	1.290	1.080	INTL. TOBACCO	7.0	0.00	53	62018	79452	1.28	1.27	.01-
	1.220	.860	UNION CH. & VEG.	10.5	0.00	6	4600	4730	1.05	1.05	-
	.860	.660	JORDAN STEEL	8.8	8.86	1	50	40	.83	.79	.04-
	.790	.570	MID.EAST COMPLEX	7.3	16.95	17	51250	30238	.59	.59	-
	1.100	.720	ARAB INT. FOOD FACT.	53.2	0.00	3	460	446	1.00	.97	.03-
	INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS		INDEX: 108.90	%CHG: -0.62		258	228090	521975			
	GRAND TOTAL		INDEX: 170.74	%CHG: -0.29		430	580036	4158404			

THE Daily Crossword

Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

TMSPuzzles@aol.com



ACROSS
1 19th President
6 Chafes
10 Fail utterly
14 Chicago airport
15 On the waves
16 Very unusual
17 Singer/actor who co-starred on "Dallas"
19 King of comedy
20 Popeye's Olive
21 Felt regret
22 Tom or Benedict
24 Setup punches
25 Stoltz of "Mask"
26 Presents an opposing case
29 Clues
33 Avoid detection
34 Ballet bend
35 Any time now
36 Ethereal
37 Western ties
38 Monster of the Mojave
39 Zesty bite
40 Garden of __
41 "The __ Man"
42 Hitman
44 Concrete ingredient
45 Poet Dove
46 Bubble masses
47 Grown-ups
50 Outline
51 Large antelope
54 Celebration
55 Original name of 17A
58 Vivacity
59 Orchestra member
60 Uncanny
61 Transmit
62 Williams and Koppel
63 Film spools

DOWN
1 Holiday chuckle
2 Nautical call
3 Two-masted sailing vessel
4 Segment of history
5 Jag the edge of
6 Lawn tools
7 Suckered
8 Hive builder
9 Wages
10 Original name of 24D
11 "Le roi d'Ys" composer
12 Spoken
13 Hang in the balance
18 Gives name
23 Eliminate
24 "Meet Me in St. Louis" star
25 Lake Geneva spa
26 Spanish cowboy's lariat
27 Walt Disney's middle name
28 Suns too much
29 Ms. Degeneres
30 Din
31 Gen. __ Powell
32 Make into law
34 Speakers' platforms
37 Most likely success
41 Ramble
43 Watch kids
44 Fossil fuel
46 Ice on the move
47 Grows older
48 Broad valley
49 __ Bator, Mongolia
50 Stick with a stick
51 "Pretty Woman" co-star
52 Singing Diamond
53 Hawaiian guitars, briefly
56 "Honest" politician
57 Spike or Pinky

By C.F. Murray
La Jolla, CA

A	B	L	E		C	H	A	T		A	D	H	O	C
L	E	I	A		R	E	N	E		F	R	I	A	R
P	E	A	S		A	N	T	E		T	E	N	S	E
S	T	R	E	A	M	L	I	N	E		A	D	E	S
			D	U	P	E		A	N	I	M	I	S	T
A	Y	E		T	O	Y		G	I	R	L			
N	E	L	S	O	N		B	E	D	T	I	M	E	S
T	A	L	C			H	U	R			K	I	L	L
S	H	A	R	E	O	U	T		P	L	E	A	S	E
			E	S	P	N		T	R	E		S	A	D
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T	E	E	N	Y		S	A	M	E		K	A	T	E
S	U	R	G	E		S	T	A	R		S	T	E	W

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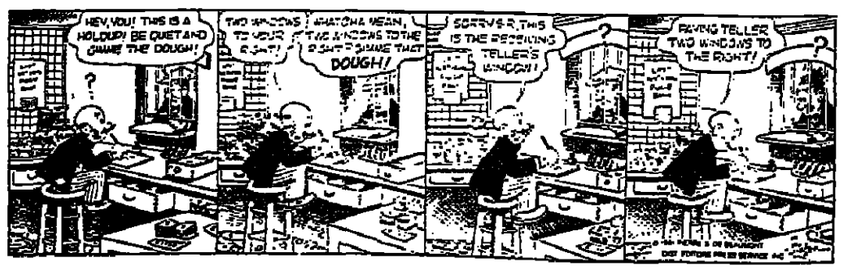
Peanuts



Andy Capp

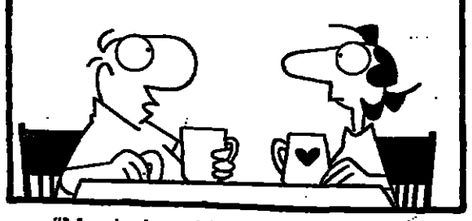


Mutt'n'Jeff



THE BETTER HALF®

By Glasbergen



"My dad and I were never close. Whenever I tried to hug him, he thought I was going for his wallet."

JUMBLE®

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME by Henri Arnold and Mike Argirion

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

TOOBA

SEHCS

NULKIE

DRUSAB

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Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Ans: _____ AND _____

(Answers tomorrow)

Saturday's Jumbles: DELVE BOUGH MARROW IMPEND
Answer: Her reaction to the still life was this — MOVING

Busine

Daily

A review

Housing
largest

• THE GENERAL ... Bank has approved ... tal to become JD... JD50 million of the ... premiums collected ... increase makes the ... Jordanian bank in ... tion, the general ... tribution of dividends ... rate of 20 per cent.

Board chairman ... general assembly that ... tax profit last year ... or 92 per cent, ... JD10.4 million ... 1997. The total of ... of that year ... 18.9 per cent higher ... stood at JD1.... equity also went ... JD212 million ...

In other financial ... deposits reached JD... of last year compared ... the end of 1996. The ... JD70.5 million or ... credits extended by ... amounted to JD27... standing balance ... being JD65... million. ... 1996).

The Housing Bank ... to capture a dominant ... local banking market. "We ... increasing our share in the ... market in commercial ... Qader Dweik, general ... Mr. Dweik told Reuters ... boost its corporate ... activities in 1998 as part ... push in the local market. ... hoped to raise its market share ... ed JD8 billion ($11.3 billion) ... bank deposits in Jordan ...

REUTERS

The Busines

Major Currencies & Ge

Currency	USD	DEM	G
US Dollar	-	1.7829	2.5
DE Mark	0.5578	-	2.3
GB Sterling	1.5737	3.0011	
CH Franc	0.6734	1.2386	2.46
JP Yen	0.0076	1.3704	2.45
CA Dollar	0.6986	1.2916	2.43
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0138	2.27
NL Guilder	0.4954	88.77	2.29
FR Franc	0.1664	0.2981	2.29

Currency	USD	JOD	SA
US Dollar	-	0.7090	3.75
Jordan Dinar	1.4104	-	5.29
Saudi Riyal	0.2666	0.1890	
Bahrain Dinar	2.65	1.8806	9.94
Qatar Dinar	0.2748	0.1948	1.03
Kuwait Dinar	3.2772	2.3235	12.29
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.1930	1.02
Lebanese/1000	0.66	0.4649	2.48
Egyptian	0.2933	0.2079	1.09

Energy

Oils	Last	reviou
Brent	13.90	14.09
W. Texas	15.92	15.53
Bonny	13.90	14.09
Dubai	12.75	12.85
Ut. Gas	158.00	158.00

JOD Cross Rates

Currency	Buy	Sell
US Dollar	0.708	0.710
GB Sterling	1.1854	1.1913
DE Mark	0.3952	0.3972
CH Franc	0.4771	0.4795
FR Franc	0.1179	0.1185
JP Yen	0.5384	0.5411
NL Guilder	0.3511	0.3529
IT Lira	0.3999	0.4019

Source: Central Bank of Jordan.

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Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Housing Bank becomes Jordan's largest bank in terms of capital

** THE GENERAL assembly of the Housing Bank has approved doubling the bank's capital to become JD100 million by capitalising JD50 million of the reserve which comprised premiums collected from issuing shares. This increase makes the Housing Bank the largest Jordanian bank in terms of capital. In addition, the general assembly approved the distribution of dividends to shareholders at the rate of 20 per cent.

Board chairman Zuhair Khoury told the general assembly that the bank boosted pre-tax profit last year by around JD9.6 million, or 92 per cent, as the amount rose from JD10.4 million in 1996 to JD20 million in 1977. The total of the balance sheet at the end of that year amounted to JD1,350.6 million, 18.9 per cent higher than the 1996 total which stood at JD1,136.2 million. Shareholders equity also went up from JD131 million to JD212 million at the end of 1997.

In other financial results, the bank's total deposits reached JD987.9 million at the end of last year compared to JD917.6 million at the end of 1996. The increase amounted to JD70.3 million or 7.7 per cent. Loans and credits extended by the bank during 1997 amounted to JD276.5 million with the outstanding balance at the end of December being JD657.9 million (JD648.3 million in 1996).

The Housing Bank said last week it aimed to capture a dominant market share in the local banking market. "We are focusing on increasing our share in the Jordanian banking market in commercial activities," said Abdul Qader Dweik, general manager of the bank.

Mr. Dweik told Reuters the bank wanted to boost its corporate lending and commercial activities in 1998 as part of an aggressive push in the local market. Bank officials said it hoped to raise its market share of an estimated JD8 billion ($11.3 billion) worth of private bank deposits in Jordan to 20 per cent in 1998, to rank second after Arab Bank.

It plans to push its share of total loans extended by the banking sector to 17.1 per cent from its current 16 per cent from its current 16 per cent, forecasting JD212 million in new loans this year. Bank officials said it was leading a $26 million local banking syndicated short-term facility to the country's only mobile operator Jordan Mobile Telephone Services (Fastlink).

The bank was optimistic it would capture the lion's share of the project financing market this year, despite a sluggish economic activity hit by regional uncertainty. Mr. Dweik said the bank forecast its 1998 operational revenues would grow by 42 per cent while net operational profits would rise 167 per cent, underpinned by streamlining of operations and improved commercial business.

He forecast pre-tax profits to reach JD39.7 million in 1998 from around JD20 million last year. Mr. Dweik said the bank posted JD11.57 million in pre-tax profits alone in the first three months of 1998, mainly through cost-cutting measures it had implemented as part of a major administrative restructuring.

The capital hike left Kuwait as the largest shareholder with 18.7 per cent while Qatar and Oman maintained equal six per cent stakes while Iran's will fell by half to three per cent. Saudi investor Khaled Ben Mahfouz substantially increased his holding to 16.3 per cent stake from a minor 1.3 per cent, acquiring two seats in a newly constituted 13-member board. Libyan Arab Foreign Bank, a new investor, acquired a 15 per cent equity stake.

The bank has become more assertive since a law was passed last year abolishing restrictions on its commercial lending, allowing it to shift its strategic focus to comprehensive banking away from its original real estate niche (Al Aswaq + Ad Dustour).

REUTERS REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates Prices as at 22/04/98 18:13

Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLG	FRF
US Dollar	-	1.7929	0.5975	1.4860	130.77	1.4314	1772.00	2.0184	6.0105
DE Mark	0.5578	-	0.3329	0.8283	72.84	0.7983	988.18	1.1261	3.3529
GB Sterling	1.6737	3.0011	-	2.4850	218.66	2.3957	2965.62	3.3788	10.0592
CH Franc	0.6734	120.66	0.4019	-	87.94	0.9636	1192.62	135.88	4.0453
JP Yen	0.0076	1.3704	0.4564	1.1348	-	1.0942	13.54	154.28	4.5942
CA Dollar	0.6986	1.2916	0.4225	1.0566	1.09	-	1270.80	1.4551	4.3255
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0108	0.3366	0.0837	1357.04	0.8071	-	11.38	3.3886
NL Guilder	0.4954	88.77	0.2956	73.56	64.71	0.7089	877.66	-	2.9762
FR Franc	0.1664	0.2982	0.0993	24.7031	21.73	0.2381	33.58	33.5800	-

Middle Eastern Currencies

Currency	USD	JOD	SAR	BAH	QAT	KUW	AED	LBP	EGP
US Dollar	-	0.7090	3.7504	0.3770	3.6395	0.3051	3.6729	1525.00	3.4100
Jordan Dinar	1.4104	-	5.2897	0.5317	5.1333	0.4304	5.1804	2150.92	4.8095
Saudi Riyal	0.2666	0.1890	-	0.1005	0.97	0.0814	0.98	406.62	0.9092
Bahrain Dinar	2.65	1.8806	9.9480	-	9.65	0.8094	9.74	4045.09	9.0451
Qatar Dinar	0.2748	0.1948	1.0305	1.0305	-	0.0838	1.01	419.01	0.9369
Kuwait Dinar	3.2772	2.3235	12.2908	1.2355	11.93	-	12.04	4997.71	0.8369
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.1930	1.0211	0.1026	0.9909	0.0831	-	415.20	0.9284
Lebanese/1000	0.66	0.4649	2.4593	0.2472	2.3866	0.2001	2.4085	-	2.2361
Egyptian	0.2933	0.2079	1.0998	0.1106	1.0673	0.0895	1.0771	447.21	-

Energy

Oils	Last	revious
Brent	13.90	14.09
W. Texas	15.92	15.53
Bonny	13.90	14.09
Dubai	12.75	12.85
UL Gas	158.00	158.00

Mid-East Currencies

Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY
SA Riyal	0.2666	0.4784	0.15931	0.39617	34.887
AE Dirham	0.2723	0.48835	0.16267	0.40453	35.6227
KW Dinar	3.2772	5.87889	1.9581	4.86855	428.816
BH Dinar	0.3770	4.75737	1.58479	3.94166	347.102
CY Pound	1.8994	3.4056	1.1342	2.8202	248.328

***JOD Cross Rates**

Currency	Buy	Sell
US Dollar	0.708	0.710
GB Sterling	1.1854	1.1913
DE Mark	0.3952	0.3972
CH Franc	0.4771	0.4795
FR Franc	0.1179	0.1185
JP Yen	0.5384	0.5411
NL Guilder	0.3511	0.3529
IT Lira	0.3989	0.4019

* Source: Central Bank of Jordan.

Libor Fixing

Period C'ncy	- 1 - Month	- 3 - Months	- 6 - Months	- 1 - Year
USD	5.6719	5.7422	5.8125	5.9375
GBP	7.4115	7.4948	7.4896	7.4896
JPY	0.6563	0.7292	0.7604	0.7813
DEM	3.6248	3.7395	3.8333	4.0207
FRF	3.5313	1.4896	1.6250	1.8229
CHF	1.3542	3.6211	3.7344	3.9453
ITL	5.4600	5.1600	4.8700	-

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR THURSDAY, APRIL 23, 1998

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You tend to buy things just because you like them, without even looking at the cost. Today, an older woman will tell you not to do that, and point out the best deals for your money. You're not usually interested in that sort of conversation, but this time you should listen.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You're forceful and dynamic, and you're letting it be known what you want and need. That gives other people the opportunity to provide it, and some of them would love to do exactly that.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Take advice from somebody who wants the best for you. In fact, it would be smart to ask for it in advance. Just walk right up to the person who wants to run your life and ask what to do next.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) There's going to be a test tonight or tomorrow, and you're going to have to prove you know what you're talking about. If you don't have any experience, don't pretend that you do.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) This morning is an excellent time to buy gifts. There are several people in your life who have gone out of their way to help, and have always applauded your performances and laughed at your jokes. You need to repay them for their generosity.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) You continue to be in the spotlight. There have been decisions to make lately, and you've done an excellent job in steering your team through the changes.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Look for another busy day, with great rewards. A lot of those will be emotional, but some will be financial. Take yourself and your partner out dancing to celebrate.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) You're strongly attracted to a person who thinks you're marvellous. That's a lot of fun, but it could interfere with your duties. If you can take work home with you, you don't have a thing to worry about. You'll be in the mood to work late into the night.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Your living environment is disrupted this morning, in a pleasant way. The trouble isn't a lack of love, it's the abundance of it. This evening, however, your sweetheart won't be quite so snuggly.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Your best time for taking on major challenges is first thing this morning. Don't put them off because they won't get any easier. Just the opposite is more likely. Your intuition is good in the morning, too. You can take leap of faith and have a better-than average chance of landing safely.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Things seem to be going more slowly than you'd like. That's OK. You needed time to think. Now you'll be assimilating information more quickly. By this evening, you'll start find the data you need to complete the task at hand. Proceed with caution and avoid an expensive mistake.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) You're strong, confident and good looking. Your intuition is excellent. You can figure out how to do just about anything you want. Now, what do you want? It's as if you're being granted three wishes, but these wishes will come true through your own imagination and hard work.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR FRIDAY, APRIL 24, 1998

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You're more confident than usual. In fact, your attitude might border on cockiness. Don't follow your first impulse, especially when it comes to divulging information. You feel like you can speak freely, but that's not a good idea.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You're under pressure, but that's OK. You're finishing up a lot of overdue items as a result. This is the perfect time of year for you to do exactly that. Clean out the garage and the attic while you're at it.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) You and your team are feeling red-hot. You've gone through tough situations together, and there are more in the future. But for now, things are looking rosy. That's all the excuse you need to celebrate this evening.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) The person you most respect and perhaps even fear is watching you like a hawk. This may seem like criticism, but actually he or she just wants to teach you how to do the job exactly right. If you can handle that, you could get a raise in pay.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) You're in a frisky mood today. That could cause a problem. An older person, possibly a boss or teacher, wants you to stick to the task at hand. You're interested in doing just about anything else. Have you got big plans for the weekend? If you haven't yet, you will by the time the day's over.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) This would be a good day to take out a loan. Talk to the people with the money and present your case. They'll ask questions, of course. You need to have the answers ready. Provide more answers than they even know they need. And hold out for a lower interest rate.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) You attention will be drawn to a very attractive person — one who's on the wild side. That OK. You probably believe you can tame this person. That's highly unlikely, but you could join forces for a thrilling ride. Get started on it first thing this morning.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) The workload is intense, but your energy level is high. The tension might be high also. See if you can get volunteers to help. You don't have money to pay, so you'll have to come up with some other incentive. No problem. You have a knack for talking people into doing what you want.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Conditions continue to push you to the top in your education or career. You're getting a shove in the right direction from someone who cares about you.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) You'd rather be home today than just about anywhere else. It looks like there's a lot of activity going on. You could be getting ready to take a trip, or maybe a long-lost loved one has shown up unexpectedly.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) You're best with machines and probably worst at emotional issues. Today you might get to deal with both. Focus on fixing an item you know you can figure out.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) There's money coming in and going out. It's up to you to make sure you wind up with a profit. You have to pay the bills, of course.

Government has no plans to liquidate troubled Spinning and Weaving Company

By Ahmad Khatib
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The government has no plans to liquidate the debt-ridden Spinning and Weaving Company (SWC) whose board of directors was dissolved last week, Louay Mismar, the comptroller of companies at the Ministry of Industry and Trade, said Wednesday.

He said the committee appointed by the Minister of industry and trade last week to run the company facing over JD8 million in debts would "try to restructure" the SWC with a paid up capital of JD10 million and decide on a long-term solution.

The appointment of the committee raised speculation among business circles that the government was considering plans to liquidate the public shareholding company.

"We do not intend to liquidate the company and I believe that none of any upcoming solution will hurt the employees," said Mr. Mismar, head of the government-appointed committee. "But it takes time to decide on the solution as we are studying the overall situation."

The committee would help secure needed liquidity to run the factory with the maximum production capacity as part of restructuring plans, he explained.

The Ministry of Industry and Trade decided earlier this month to dissolve the board of directors of the company which was hit by administrative and financial problems.

A court is still looking into charges of alleged embezzlement of millions of dinars by several former officials, a move that has harmed the SWC's performance.

Last week, the general association of workers in the spinning, weaving, and clothing industry asked the government to intervene to prevent the liquidation of the company and to safeguard the rights of shareholders and workers to avoid swelling the ranks of the unemployed.

The association said mismanagement was the main reason for the company's troubles and claimed some "circles" were planning to take over the SWC at extremely low prices.

By the end of last year, the company had posted an accumulated loss of JD8 million while total debts stood at JD12 million. The shareholders' equity reached JD658,483 at the end of 1997.

The association recommended forming a committee to manage the company for three years and to restructure its finances through partial or full debts capitalisation and rescheduling the rest without interest.

It also recommended providing a working capital to enable the plant to continue operations and production and stressed that the company was expected to continue growing and prospering as a result of the increasing demand on its high-quality and low-cost products.

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Confident Bulls begin 'three-peat' bid

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Michael Jordan and Scottie Pippen enter the National Basketball Association playoffs confident but vulnerable in what could be the final run of the Chicago Bulls' dynasty.

The Bulls, seeking their sixth NBA crown in eight years and third in a row, open a best-of-five first round series Friday against New Jersey.

Chicago and Utah were a league-best 62-20 but the Jazz, losers to the Bulls in last year's final, won the overall home-court edge. The prospect of having to conquer Utah in Salt Lake City does not daunt the Bulls.

"We feel confident we can go anywhere and win," Pippen said. "Our confidence is high especially when we go on the road. We know how to win. But Utah has been a dificult place to go in and play. The games become a little more difficult. It's a challenge for us."

The Bulls have thrived on challenges. But this year's club has not been as overpowering as in past years and it's future is in doubt.

Bulls' general manager Jerry Krause said he will not retain coach Phil Jackson. Jordan said he will play for no other coach. Pippen's contract is expiring. He wants a pay hike the Bulls have been unwilling to give.

"I still think Chicago is the best team," Seattle coach George Karl said. "But I also think this is the most vulnerable they've been. The Bulls got a year older but not a year better. Usually when a team gets older, it's offset by getting better because of maturity. This is the first time I've seen some age on the court with them."

Jordan, 35, won his 10th scoring title with 28.7 points a game. Rodman, 37 next month, won a seventh rebounding crown with 15 a game. Pippen, 32, has been the playmaker allowing both to excel.

"I wouldn't give up on what we have right now," Jordan said. "I'm pretty happy we're in a position to accomplish what we set out to do."

That means winning a third title with the same basic roster. Jackson said he sees this team as better than last year's club going into the playoffs.

"We finally have an opportunity to do what we hoped to do when we came back last year, and that is win another championship with this group of guys," Jackson said.

"I can guarantee you this team is going to come back in the playoffs and look very good. We've gotten over the mundane part of the season. We're ready to take on all comers and beat them in a playoff series."

The sentimental aspect of what is likely their final run together has not played a major factor thus far, Jackson said.

"I don't think we're sentimental about it. We dealt with the aspect of this being three great seasons of being together and what a great time we've had. This is a mercenary challenge. This is beyond sentiment."

Croatian forward Toni Kukoc is back after a foot injury. Australian center Luc Longley comes off an injured left knee that kept him out of 22 of the final 24 season games. But the timing of his return is uncertain.

"We know we will need Luc back at some point if we're going to win a championship," Jackson said.

Working Longley back into the lineup is a priority for Pippen as well.

"We need to find some rhythm. Luc has not been out there and it's difficult knowing he will be back in the lineup once the playoffs start," Pippen said.

Even Jordan, who made 33.14 million dollars this season, felt off his game as the season ended. But he expects to regain top form for the playoffs.

"These things happen Hopefully it won't last long," he said. "I just have to work a little bit and find my rhythm."

RACJ holds 2nd Speed Test Friday

By Roufan Nahhas
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN— The Second Pepsi Speed Test kicks off Friday at the new improved race track at the Royal Automobile Club of Jordan (RACJ).

Fourteen professional drivers registered until press time and the number was expected to increase before registration closes Thursday.

A heated competition is expected between champion Ghaith Bilbeisi and Yasser Jarrar.

Bilbeisi won the first round of the speed test in April with a split of a second from Jarrar who is expected to try his utmost to take the lead.

The speed test consists of two rounds and an additional third one for the best 10 drivers.

The test will witness Abeer Batikhi's participation as the only woman driver so far. Meanwhile, names like Tala Shawwa, Suha Tabaa' and Maya Mufti are absent this time.

Mufti who took part in several speed tests here in the Kingdom is leaving to Lebanon to take part in Rally du Liban.

She will be partnering Lebanese co-driver Hala Nasser Al Dein in a Nissan Pulsar through the Lebanese mountains on May 2.

Meanwhile, the RACJ is trying to revive an old popular event — the go-cart.

According to RACJ spokesman Bader Rasheed, 35 go-cart cars arrived recently and plans for a 8 - round event is on.

In the older days go-carting was a popular sports for all ages but it stopped for a while and now people are back to this kind of entertainment.

Popular names on the rally scene registered in the first go-cart race sponsored by Al Aswaq newspaper including Samir Rifai', Tarek Tabaa', Alaa' Haddad and Khaled Zakaria.

The third round of Pepsi Speed Test will start May 2.

RACJ is also preparing for the May 13-14 Jordan International Rally, considered one of the most important rallies in the Middle East.

Participants in the 2nd Pepsi Speed Test (by press time):

Sharif Hussein Ghazi, Ghaith Bilbeisi, Yasser Jarrar, Edmer Al Shishani, Khatchik Shadian, Aboud Musmar, Ameer Najjar, Mohammed Al Shishani, Hassan Al Shishani, Raed Haddad, Salah Al Nibali, Asem Aref, Mohammed Al Qirm and Abeer Batikhi.

Auriol finally wins again as McRae falls out



World championship leader Spain's Carlos Sainz drives his Toyota Corolla during the final day of the Catalunya Rally April 22. Sainz had dropped from third to eighth after a puncture to his car on stage 15. France's Didier Auriol increased his lead to 52.1 seconds over Belgian Freddy Loix (Reuters photo)

LLORET DE MAR, Spain (AFP) — France's Didier Auriol won his first rally in three years when he took the Catalunya Rally here on Wednesday.

Auriol, in a Toyota Corolla, finished nearly a minute ahead of Belgium's Freddy Loix in another Toyota. Finland's Tommi Makinen was third in his Mitsubishi.

Championship leader Carlos Sainz of Spain finished seventh in his Toyota but it was still enough to retain his lead in the title race.

Britain's Colin McRae, who won here in 1996, failed to finish because of mechanical problems.

"It has just been one of those rallies where nothing has sgone as we planned it," said the Scot.

"It's one of those events we have to put behind us but it obviously a massice disappointment after winning in Portugal and renewing our championship hopes. Fortunately the points situation is not too desperate," added McRae.

McRae is in fourth spot in the championship standings, only eight points behinf Sainz.

Brazil top FIFA rankings

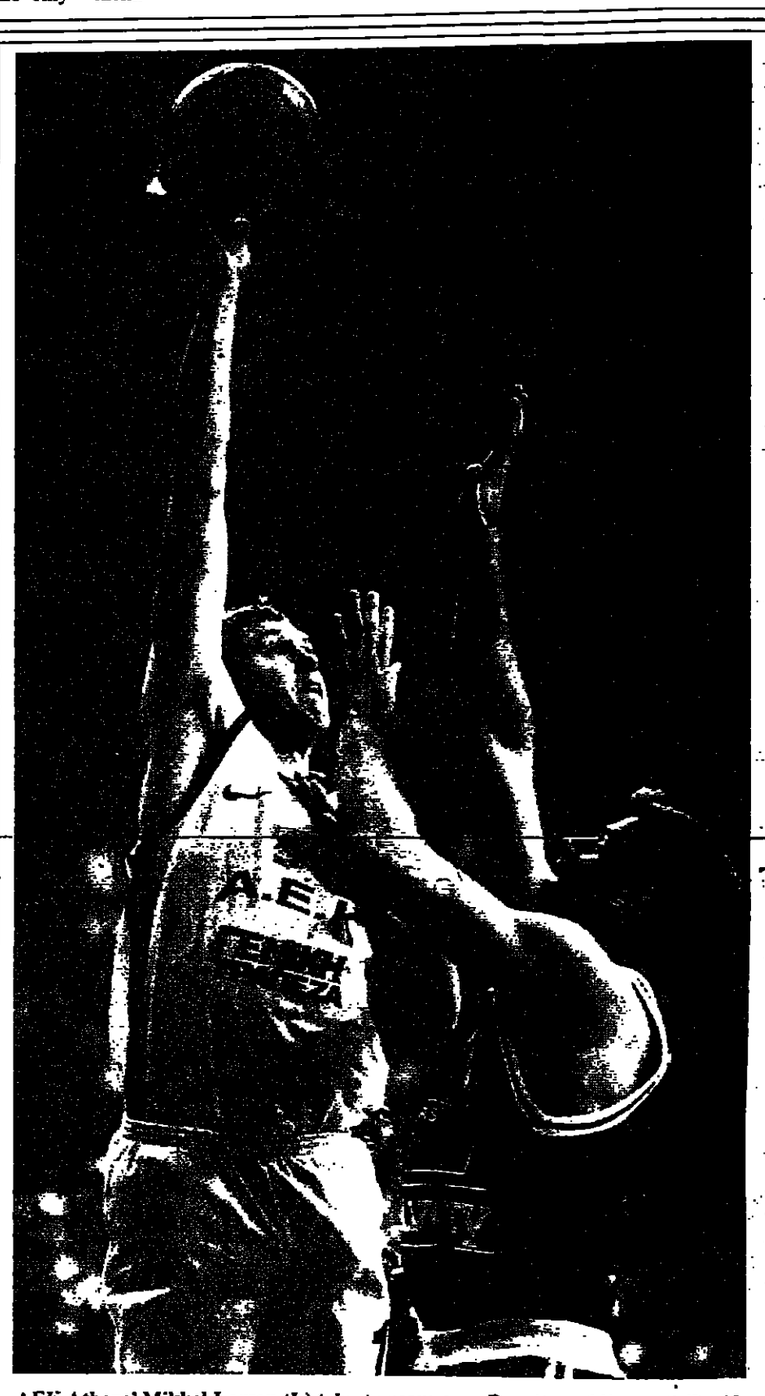
ZURICH (AFP) — Spain has jumped back into the FIFA rankings top ten after their recent 4-0 drubbing of Sweden.

The Spaniards have moved up 16 places into ninth spot.

Brazil go even further ahead at the top of the table after beating second ranked Germany earlier this month.

Rankings (end of 1997 rankings in brackets):

1	Brazil (1)	72.28
2	Germany (2)	65.45
3	Czech Rep. (3)	64.29
4	Mexico (5)	60.76
5	England (4)	59.46
6	Chile (16)	59.15
7	Argentina (17)	58.98
8	Yugoslavia (20)	58.12
9	Spain (11)	57.96
10	Morocco (15)	57.91
11	Japan (14)	57.88
12	Norway (13)	57.82
13	Colombia (10)	57.80
14	Netherl. (22)	57.45
15	USA (26)	57.18
16	Italy (9)	57.16
17	Russia (12)	56.64
18	Egypt (32)	56.34
19	Zambia (21)	56.28
20	Denmark (8)	56.15



AEK Athens' Mikkel Larsen (L) tries to score over Benetton of Treviso's Davide Bonora during their second semi final of the European Final Four Basketball tournament April 21. AEK won 69-66 and will face Italian side Kinder Bologna in the final (Reuters photo)

Chang struggles at U.S. Clay Court Championships

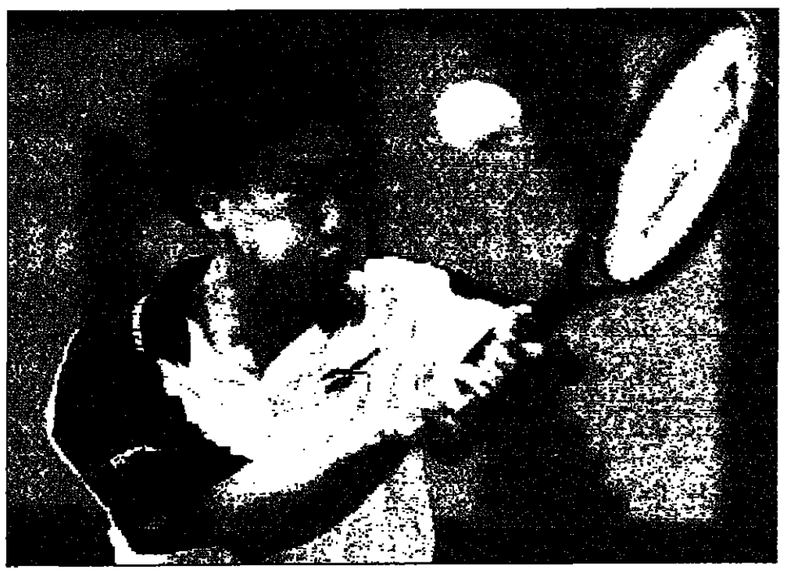
ORLANDO (AFP) — Top seed and defending champion Michael Chang withstood a challenge from Paraguay's Ramon Delgado before winning his opener in three sets at the ATP U.S. Clay Court Championships.

Chang, who has fallen from second to 12th in world rankings, outlasted Delgado 6-4, 3-6, 7-6 (7/1) here Tuesday at the $315,000 event.

The Asian-American star has struggled with a recent knee injury. Since winning here a year ago he has been ousted 11 times in early rounds and taken only one title.

Third-seeded American wild card Jim Courier, competing for the first time since an emotional Davis Cup victory three weeks ago that beat Russia, ousted compatriot Geoff Grant 6-1, 6-2.

Courier beat 18-year-old Marat Safin in the Davis Cup, rallying to win the fourth and fifth sets to advance the U.S. team.



Michael Chang

Australia's Andrew Ilie ousted fourth seed Vincent Spadea of the United States 6-4, 6-2 while Jan-Michael Gambill toppled sixth seed Wayne Black of Zimbabwe 7-6 (7-5), 6-2.

Last year's runner-up, seventh seed Grant Stafford of South Africa, advanced by beating Belgium's Johan Van Herck 6-3, 6-1.

Major League Soccer looks to sell Etcheverry

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The Major League Soccer organisation is considering selling Bolivian midfielder Marco Etcheverry, the star of two-time reigning champions Washington D.C. United, to leading French club Paris St Germain for $5 million.

Etcheverry and United officials are expected to meet with MLS deputy commissioner Sunil Gulati in the next two weeks to discuss the interest from PSG. The move would be another major blow to United, which has dominated the MLS in the league's first two seasons and disrupted the parity MLS commissioner Doug Logan values to stabilize a league still trying to find an identity.

"We constructed a league in which there would be no dynasty, but one has occurred," Logan said. United lost Salvadoran forward Raul Diaz Arce to New England before the season began, a move mandated by the league to keep United's payroll in line with other league clubs.

In MLS, the league owns player contracts and distributes them as they like. Mexico's Jorge Campos and Colombia's Carlos Valderrama were sent to expansion teams this season to help them become competitive faster. Kevin Payne, D.C. United's president and general manager, said league rules would allow the club to veto a transfer, even though MLS rules say the league would be required to replace him with talent of equal stature.

"The league was not set up to establish parity ... uniformed mediocrity," Payne said. "It was set up to create a level playing field." The French team would more than double Etcheverry's salary, the MLS annual maximum of $236,750, and the Bolivian would receive 10 per cent of the transfer fee. Etcheverry, 27, signed a long-term contract extention last year but the deal might be too good for MLS to turn down.

TODAY AT

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PHILADELPHIA '2'
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Sports

SPORTS I

FA lift drugs ban on

LONDON (AFP) — Former ... Jamie Stuart on Wednesday ... restart his career after the Foot... a ban imposed for failing a dru... of the game for six months after... First Division club Charlton ... cocaine and marijuana. But he ... make a lucrative free transfer ... to face a series of random drug ... the next two years and was off... about his future conduct.

Boston will not ban K

BOSTON (AFP) — Eight ... Kenyan men at the Boston Ma... 102-year-old race into restricting ... boost United States hopes in ... title here Monday and Ethiopia ... women's title. No American man ... and no U.S. woman has taken ... Boulder Bolder, a 10-kilometre ... restricting competition to three ... except for U.S. athletes and some ... U.S. efforts but not foreign racers ... here, said David D'Alessandro ... services company which ... Marathon sponsor. "Are ... American event'" he said.

Vieri hits out at Italy's

PARMA (AFP) — Footballer ... chances of winning the World ... Christian Vieri. The Atletico Madrid ... Spanish League, has rounded ... think that Italy are in for an ... '98 after struggling to qualify. ... around over what this national ... he said. "And it's all wrong. ... Italy's World Cup. "And ... we're a tighter, and more mature ... And we've got faith in our ...

Chinese World Cup web

HONG KONG (AFP) — The ... (CIC) on Wednesday launched ... web site on the 1998 football ... soccer fans access to a huge ... Agence France-Presse (AFP) ... coach, player and game ever... began in 1930. CIC director ... Vicky Hung. ... (http://www.worldcup98.china.... AFP's real-time coverage of ... summer's tournament in France.

Fans fume as W

PARIS (AFP) — Desperate football fans throughout Europe were left fuming Wednesday and telephone operators were swamped as France put 110,000 last gasp World Cup tickets on sale.

Supporters from London to Bonn got nothing but the busy signal as they tried to get though as soon as the lines were available at 0600 GMT.

"During the first three hours, France Telecom counted 10 million calls coming in, of which two and a half million were from abroad," said Bruno Travade, director of the French World Cup Organising Committee (CFO).

"That doesn't mean that 10 million people called, because many of them called several times," Travade added.

He insisted that the system was working well and it was only normal that there were some delays in answering the calls or that some callers failed to get through.

In Germany, however, the German Football Federation was saturated with irate calls complaining about the situation.

In Denmark it was equally impossible to get through to the French World Cup Organising Committee (CFO).

"We rang an hour before the tickets were officially due to be put on sale, hoping to be amongst the first, but we could not get through," said one supporter in Copenhagen.

Tele Denmark increased the number of lines to France from the normal 300 to 600 but it made no difference.

"Normally 70 per cent of calls get through to France first time but today that has fallen to only six per cent," said spokesman Benny Dam. "It is very difficult to get through."

In Belgium, telephone operator Belgacom reported 1.4 million calls in the first four hours although intense pressure on the net-

SPORTS IN BRIEF

FA lift drugs ban on Stuart

LONDON (AFP) — Former England under-21 defender Jamie Stuart on Wednesday was given the go-ahead to restart his career after the Football Association (FA) lifted a ban imposed for failing a drugs test. Stuart has been out of the game for six months after being released by English First Division club Charlton after he tested positive for cocaine and marijuana, but he now has the chance to make a lucrative free transfer move. Stuart will still have to face a series of random drugs tests over the course of the next two years and was officially warned by the FA about his future conduct.

Boston will not ban Kenyans

BOSTON (AFP) — Eight consecutive victories by Kenyan men at the Boston Marathon will not push the 102-year-old race into restricting international runners to boost United States hopefuls. Moses Tanui won the men's title here Monday and Ethiopia's Fatuma Roba took the women's title. No American man has won here since 1983 and no U.S. woman has taken the title since 1985. The Boulder Bolder, a 10-kilometre event in Colorado, is restricting competition to three runners from any nation except for U.S. athletes and other races offer prizes for U.S. efforts but not foreign racers. That will not happen here, said David D'Alessandro, president of the financial services company which serves as the main Boston Marathon sponsor. "Are you a world-class event or an American event?" he said.

Vieri hits out at Italy's critics

PARMA (AFP) — Too many people are writing off Italy's chances of winning the World Cup, says angry striker Christian Vieri. The Atletico Madrid ace, top scorer in the Spanish League, has rounded on the critics here who think that Italy are in for an unpleasant surprise at France '98 after struggling to qualify. "I see too much scepticism around over what this national side is capable of doing," he said. "And it's all wrong. I reckon this is going to be Italy's World Cup. "And do you know why? Because we're a tighter, and more mature group than in the past. And we've got faith in our coach."

Chinese World Cup web site launched

HONG KONG (AFP) — The China Internet Corporation (CIC) on Wednesday launched the first Chinese-language web site on the 1998 football World Cup. The site gives soccer fans access to a huge data base, prepared by Agence France-Presse (AFP), profiling every team, coach, player and game ever played since the tournament began in 1930, CIC director of product management Vicky Hung said. The site (http://www.worldcup98.china.com) will also provide AFP's real-time coverage of news and results from this summer's tournament in France.

Rusedski blasts ATP coaching experiment

MONTE CARLO (AFP) — Britain's Greg Rusedski branded as rubbish on Wednesday an ATP Tour experiment with on-court coaching which will be continued at next week's tournament in Munich.

"It's absolute rubbish" said the Canadian-turned-Briton after taking a 6-4, 3-6, 6-3 second-round defeat to unseeded German tennis icon Boris Becker.

"This sport has been without coaches. It will not seem like tennis. The only reason they are doing it is to try and make the sport more popular in the U.S. It's not lacking any spectators in Europe."

Rusedski's complaints stem from a decision taken last month by the by the powerful ATP Tour Players Council.

Victoria Park in Hong Kong a fortnight ago served as the first venue for a limited 1998 trial of Davis Cup-style on-court strategy sessions, allowed to take place after the first and second sets.

Under the strict guidelines — among the first major shakeup in tennis since the tiebreak scoring system was introduced in the 1970s — coaches are allowed to consult with their players for two minutes at the end of each set.

The experiment will in effect at next week's BMW Open in Munich and at Atlanta, Gstaad and Los Angeles in July).

Coaches will be designated by players before the tournament and will come down from the stands for the specified consultations.

Andre Agassi, whose sense of showmanship is well-known, would like to see a further wrinkle. He believes that a good idea should be taken even further — by wiring the coaches for sound and broadcasting the strategy sessions as a part of television coverage.

"The people at home need to know what the player is being told," said the most flamboyant current name in the game. "I think the coaches need to have press conferences and answer for the things they've said. I'm serious."

Players, tournament directors and administrators feel that the new wrinkle might inject a further touch of intrigue into the men's game, which appears to be losing ground to the teenaged rivalries which are lighting up the women's game.

Rusedski, coached by Brton Tony Picard, said he would use his mentor, "but tennis has always been a one-on-one sport." "I find it all a little bit strange. It's not tennis," he said.

Becker, also something of a traditionalist, has a more open mind about the plan.

"They're trying to make a lot of changes in tennis recently — and some are not necessary.

"Two or thre years ago they wanted to take away the second serve. Tennis is much more complicated. Tennis is a very old sport. Obviously you have to make some changes, but you don't have to change the whole thing. It has survived us."

The German said that he would not mind having coaches on the bench along with the player. "We have communication with coaches, even though they're on the sidelines.

"Why just after each set? It could make tennis altogether better because players could comeback once they lose their minds (during a match)."

Becker beats Rusedski for 3rd round place at Monte Carlo

MONTE CARLO (AFP) — Boris Becker, still searching for the first claycourt title of his brilliant career, stepped smartly into the third round of the $2.45 million Monte Carlo Open Wednesday, beating Briton Greg Rusedski 6-4, 3-6, 6-3.

Becker's 49 career titles have all come everywhere but on the "dirt." The 30-year-old German has missed out here on three occasions, losing finals in 1989, 1991 and 1995.

Becker took a 4-2 lead in the third set, smashing over a winner against third seeded Rusedski.

The German held for 5-2 and served out the win after a few hiccups.

Becker suffered a minor late lapse, giving Rusedski a break point in the final game with a mis-hit smash. But the Briton returned the favour with a lob long.

Becker double-faulted for a second break point, saving that error with a backhand volley deep. The German returned wide for a third break chance for Rusedski and drew a scream from the seed when the opportunity was lost.

Becker finally stopped the rot as he won on first match point from Rusedski's backhand into the net after one hour, 53 minutes.

"I don't think I've ever missed so many smashes," said the winner. "As the tournament goes on, it gets more difficult. I play Mark Philippoussis tomorrow, it's another chance to win a match."

While Australian Open holder Petr Korda, the Czech second seed, dispatched South African Wayne Ferreira 6-1, 6-3 to reach the third round and fourth seed Yevgeny Kafelnikov came back to oust Australian Mark Woodforde 4-6, 6-2, 6-2, there was an early upset on Day Three.

Czech Slava Dosedel equalled his career-best showing here by crushing fifth seed Jonas Bjorkman of Sweden in a quick 6-1, 6-0 decision to move into the round of 16.

The Swede had been suffering from a virus and was not even sure that he would take to the court. The win took 48 minutes.

Spanish 12th seed Alberto Berasategui ousted Czech Daniel Vacek 6-0, 7-6 (7/1).

Andre Agassi, 21st on the ATP Tour list, was playing top seed Pete Sampras in a second-round contest.

Sampras has never won a match at Monte Carlo and is far from a major threat on clay.

Two-time French Open finalist Agassi is bolstered by confidence from a Tuesday win against Barcelona trophyholder Todd Martin and could derail any Sampras chance of taking back the world No. 1 position with a victory over his compatriot.

Sampras was knocked out of the top spot last month by Chile's Marcelo Rios, who is not playing thi week due to an elbow injury.

Korda figures in the rankings mix. If the second seed win 212 more ranking points than Sampras this week — in effect reaching the semifinals — then Korda could take over No. 1.

Rusedski was displeased with his showing. "I'm disappointed with myself for losing. I didn't do the right thing in terms of shots. I just put the ball back and didn't attack.

"I was too defensive in my play. It would have been nice to win and play Mark Philippoussis in the next round."

The Briton added: "I gave him the initiative."

Rusedski said that he will stay in Monte Carlo and train before playing in Munich next week along with Tim Henman.

"I know I can play well on clay. But you have to win matches in order to get confidence. This would have ben a nice match to win."

His goal is simple: "I want to win my first match on clay this year. I hope to get on a roll in Munich. It's a quicker court than here."

He said that even though Becker is semi-retired he is always difficult to play.

"He's practising just as much as he did when he was at the top, it's just that he's not playing in as many events. He's hitting a lot of balls and he's tough to play."



Russia's four seeded Yevgeny Kafelnikov returns the ball during his match versus Australia's Mark Woodforde in the second round of the Monte Carlo Open. Kafelnikov defeated Woodforde 4-6 6-2 6-2 (Reuters photo)



Germany's Boris Becker looks at the ball as he returns during his match versus Great Britain's Greg Rusedski in the second round of the Monte Carlo open April 22. Becker defeated Rusedski 6-4 3-6 6-3 (Reuters photo)

Fans fume as World Cup phone lines get swamped

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"Normally 70 per cent of calls get through to France first time but today that has fallen to only six per cent," said spokesman Benny Dam. "It is very difficult to get though."

In Belgium, telephone operator Belgacom reported 1.64 million calls in the first four hours although intense pressure on the network meant that only half a million of them made it to Paris.

Even people in France were having difficulty trying to find a free line.

France-Info radio station put ten phones on automatic redial and after three hours were still waiting for a reply.

Until Wednesday the booking hotline could only be accessed from within France and callers had to give a French address to which tickets could be sent.

Sixty per cent of the tickets destined for fans had been allocated solely to French supporters.

The CFO agreed to the changes introduced today following threats of legal action from the European Commission.

But the Football Supporters' Association believe the hotline amounts to nothing more than a public relations exercise by the CFO.

A spokeswoman said: "I just think they are going to try to do the minimum possible to comply with EU regulations to make sure they're not in trouble from that point of view.

Thirty Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) said they would continue their legal attempt to block the distribution of more than half a million World Cup tickets already sold to French residents.

The move comes despite the MEP's failure on Tuesday night to win an injunction which would have suspended the release of the final 110,000 tickets.

The MEPs allege the organising committee had breached European Union single market legislation by allocating the majority of tickets to French residents.

The Court of First Instance in Paris agreed that the MEPs' case was admissible but rejected their appeal for the sale of the remaining available tickets to be suspended until it rules in the case.

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7:00 p.m.	Sixten / Dancing Feet - Sweden
Tuesday 28th April, 1998	
4:30 p.m.	Pelle the Conqueror - Denmark
7:00 p.m.	Dog Thieves - Finland
Wednesday 29th April, 1998	
4:30 p.m.	Whitebear King Valemon - Norway
7:00 p.m.	Benjamin Dove - Iceland
Thursday 30th April, 1998	
11:00 a.m.	Dog Thieves - Finland
4:30 p.m.	Benjamin Dove - Iceland
7:00 p.m.	The Brothers Lionheart - Sweden
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Netanyahu on verge of agreement to bring hardliners into coalition

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Israeli Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu tried Wednesday to anchor his fragile coalition government more firmly on the political right ahead of a new U.S. push to break the deadlock in the Palestinian peace process.

Officials said negotiations lasting into the early hours of Wednesday morning had nearly sealed an agreement to bring the extreme right-wing Moledet Party into government.

The addition of Moledet's two deputies would boost Netanyahu's majority in parliament — now a minimal one seat in the 120-member chamber since the defection in January of the centrist Gesher Party of former Foreign Minister David Levy.

It would also greatly reinforce the most hardline nationalist camp in the coalition — a central plank of Moledet's 1996 election campaign was a call for the transfer of all Arabs out of Israel and the occupied territories.

The party is fiercely opposed to any further troop withdrawals from the West Bank — a key requirement of signed peace accords and the core requirement of a peace package being pushed by the United States.

Analysts were divided over the aim of Netanyahu's manoeuvre, which came amid two weeks of intense diplomatic activity aimed at reviving the Palestinian peace process after more than a year of deadlock.

U.S. peace envoy Dennis Ross is due in the region Saturday for a new push to gain Israeli approval of a package deal centred on an Israeli withdrawal from another 13 per cent of the West Bank in return for specific Palestinian action against armed Islamist militants.

Moledet's 96 election campaign was a call for transfer of all Arabs out of Israel and occupied territories

Mr. Ross' mission is to prepare the way for separate meetings in London on May 4 between Mr. Netanyahu, Palestinian President Yasser Arafat and U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, possibly to seal a deal.

Mr. Netanyahu is also due to hold his first meeting in a year next Tuesday with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, who has become increasingly vocal in recent months over the Israeli leader's handling of the peace process.

Mr. Netanyahu justified his overture to Moledet as designed to strengthen his parliamentary majority "to advance the peace process."

"With the entry of Moledet into the coalition, Netanyahu is trying to calm nervous [Jewish] settlers while dividing the camp of right-wing receptionists in parliament," said political analyst Shmuel Sandler.

According to this view, Mr. Netanyahu's aim is to neutralise a potentially dangerous opponent in preparation for a troop withdrawal deal with the Palestinians and subsequent parliamentary vote on the agreement.

Officials close to the negotiations with Moledet said Mr. Netanyahu was insisting the party agree to abstain in any no confidence vote lodged against the government by far-right deputies to block a peace agreement.

In exchange, Moledet chief Rehavam Zeevi would become a minister without portfolio and get a coveted seat on the inner "security cabinet" responsible for overseeing peace negotiations.

But even moderates within Mr. Netanyahu's coalition were openly worried about the move while Palestinians were outraged.

Meir Shetreet, parliamentary whip for Netanyahu's Likud Party and its coalition allies, publicly expressed his opposition to any deal with Moledet, as did the centrist Third Way Party, which has three deputies.

Palestinians saw a further indication that Mr. Netanyahu was determined to resist U.S. and European pressure for greater flexibility in negotiations with the Palestinians.

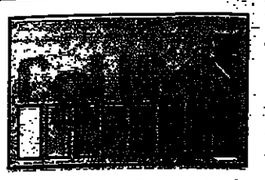
"I was not optimistic about Netanyahu going through with the troop withdrawals before and I'm even less optimistic now," Ahmad Tibi, an Arab Israeli advisor to Mr. Arafat, told AFP.

Meanwhile, Mr. Netanyahu met with his top ministers Wednesday to discuss the scope of the troop withdrawal Israel would be willing to carry out.

Washington is reportedly insisting Israel cede at least another 13 per cent of the territory while Mr. Netanyahu's cabinet has so far refused to offer more than nine per cent.



COOLING DOWN: One of New Delhi's ubiquitous monkeys comes face to face with his reflection as he stretches for a drink from a pond in the capital Wednesday. As summer nears its head in the capital, sending temperatures over 40 degrees Celsius, the race to cool down, for humans as well as monkeys, has begun (AFP photo)



Grant and Roberts shoot sequel to 'Four Weddings and a Funeral'

LONDON (AFP) — Hugh Grant and Julia Roberts have begun shooting a follow-up to the box-office smash "Four Weddings and a Funeral." The movie, tentatively entitled "The Notting Hill Project" after the part of London where it's being filmed, is not actually a sequel to the original, according to the tabloid Sun daily. But it will take up the spirit of "Four Weddings," with Roberts playing an American actress who falls in love with Grant as a second-hand bookseller. Roberts is reportedly earning over $9 million for "The Notting Hill Project." The original comedy starred Grant and Andie MacDowell.

DiCaprio not going to rush into marriage

BONN (AFP) — "Titanic" star Leonardo DiCaprio says he's not going to rush into marriage, telling the German magazine Bunte he wants "20 years of living together" with someone before making her Mrs DiCaprio. The 23-year-old heart-throb actor said if he did marry, "it would only be if I had already lived with my partner for a long time, about 10 or 20 years". DiCaprio said he was overwhelmed by how nice his legion of admirers were. He said he was surprised they only wanted to "just to talk a little, take a photo, or have an autograph" — unlike fellow stars who get the knife-wielding maniacs.

Loadsamoney is Spice Girls new No.1

LONDON (AFP) — The Spice Girls have got a new number one. It's called loadsamoney. The brash all-girl pop sensations have shot to the top of Britain's money charts, earning a whopping £43 million ($72 million) last year, according to the Times. That put them well above traditional and proven money-spinners such as the Rolling Stones (a mere £31 million), the Beatles (£26 million) and Elton John (£25 million). In 1996, the Spice Girls managed to earn only £8 million between them.

Dustin Hoffman's adopted daughter guilty of stealing cheques

LONDON (AFP) — Dustin Hoffman's adopted daughter was sentenced Tuesday to 180 hours of community work after pleading guilty to stealing cheques and obtaining money by deception. Karina Hoffman-Birkhead, 32, pleaded guilty to illegally pocketing some $8,400 in cheques and cash from her employers, a firm in southern England specialising in hiring out caravans to film companies. Hoffman-Birkhead said she had taken the money because of financial problems following a divorce.

Canadians are changing guard at Buckingham Palace

LONDON (R) — They're changing guard at Buckingham Palace — to Canadian soldiers. Where Christopher Robin once went down with Alice, the army said Canadian soldiers will this month mount guard outside Queen Elizabeth's London residence for the first time since her coronation in 1953. Ninety-four men from Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry are visiting Britain for a programme of events that includes the reopening of the refurbished Canadian High Commission. They will mount guard at Buckingham Palace for about a month from April 29.

Lebanon explains rejection of Israeli offer to U.N. permanent members

BEIRUT (AFP) — Lebanese Foreign Minister Fares Bouez summoned ambassadors of the five permanent U.N. Security Council members on Wednesday to defend its rejection of Israel's offer to withdraw from south Lebanon.

"We want to explain the position of Lebanon which rejected the Israeli proposal," said Mr. Bweiz after meeting with ambassadors from Britain, China France, Russia and the United States.

The move was part of a joint Lebanese-Syrian diplomatic offensive to defend their rejection of Israel's offer to withdraw from south Lebanon, as called for in a 20-year-old U.N. resolution, provided it obtains security guarantees.

Both Beirut and Damascus, the main power broker in Lebanon where it maintains 35,000 troops, have rejected the proposal, saying U.N. Security Council Resolution 425 adopted in 1978 calls for unconditional withdrawal.

"The proposal is just to cover up for the internal Israeli protests over the occupation of southern Lebanon and the international protests over the halt at the peace negotiations," said Mr. Bouez.

Resolution 425 "is clear and does not need to be explained. Nobody should change it," he added.

ICRC, Iraq discuss missing Kuwaitis

BAGHDAD (AP) — The International Committee of the Red Cross is negotiating for access to Iraqi jails as part of the search for Kuwaitis and other foreigners missing since the 1990 Gulf crisis, a Red Cross official said Wednesday.

Manuel Bessler, the ICRC representative here, also said Iraq was excavating mass graves dug by the allied forces for Iraqis killed in the 1991 Gulf war. This, too, may yield clues to the missing, he said.

The ICRC, headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, is a worldwide aid and rescue organisation that often has assisted in prisoner exchanges.

Kuwait has said that 600 people — including more than 500 Kuwaitis, more than a dozen Saudis and other foreign nationals — are still unaccounted for since Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait, which set off the Gulf war.

Iraq says some 700 Iraqis went missing in Kuwait or on Gulf war battlefields.

Iraq has denied repeatedly that it is holding any Kuwaitis in its jails, despite reports to the contrary that surface from time to time in Kuwait.

Iraq also has said repeatedly that the Red Cross was free to visit its prisons, but Mr. Bessler maintained that discussions on access were still under way.

"There is an ongoing discussion about ICRC access... But this is not concluded," Mr. Bessler told the Associated Press.

"If we come to an agreement, the access will be to visit all [foreign] detained persons and take care of the detained population in Iraq," he said.

The ICRC traditionally works to make sure prisoners are well-treated. It often carries mail between prisoners and their families and assists in repatriating those who are released.

Mr. Bessler said, only "a few cases" have been resolved so far, adding: "It is a very complex issue, very difficult."

Mr. Bessler also said that Iraq — relying on maps provided by the United States and its allies — have started unearthing sites it believes contain mass graves for information about battlefield dead.

Under the U.N. ceasefire resolutions that ended the war, Iraq is obliged to account for the missing foreigners as well as to eliminate its weapons of mass destruction.

The U.N. Security Council has said that punishing trade sanctions imposed after the invasion will not be lifted until Iraq fulfils its obligations under the resolutions.

Baghdad newspapers on Wednesday carried a statement from the Iraqi foreign ministry that attacked Kuwait for alleged attempts "to politicise the issue of missing Kuwaitis" in a bid to prolong the sanctions.

The statement, attributed to an unnamed spokesman, said Iraq had "dealt with 300 files of missing Kuwaitis... and provided information on 126 others."

It added that Iraq does not consider the missing Kuwaitis as prisoners of war but as people who went missing during the Gulf conflict, saying this was a phenomenon of all wars.

The talks with the ICRC are the latest with Iraq involving prisoners.

Kingdom's privatisation process sparks nationwide debate

(Continued from page 1)

a 30-year lease basis.

Jordan has already taken moves to commercialise state companies such as the debt-burdened state airline, Royal Jordanian (RJ), as a first step to the eventual purchase of substantial stakes by the private sector. It has issued invitations to international financial and legal advisors for the sale of 40-60 per cent of a new debt-free subsidiary of RJ to a strategic partner and bids are expected by May 4.

The government has embarked on a sell-off of 40 per cent of its stakes in its profitable telecommunications company to a foreign strategic partner in a deal to be concluded by the middle of this year. The move, along with a proposed 33 per cent sale in the Jordan Cement Factories Company, has come under criticism from ordinary Jordanians, not just the traditional opposition.

But not all critics want the government to slow down the process. Some, mainly in the business community, say the government is dragging its feet and could lose opportunities to more attractive emerging markets in former Eastern bloc and Asian countries.

Others say the government, not fully convinced of the idea, lacks a cohesive privatisation agenda with clear priorities.

Investors worry that political infighting, combined with a heated public debate may put brakes on the whole process.

They point to the government's handling of the sale of the cement firm shares, of which the government owns 49.5 per cent. Only two weeks ago, after almost two years of indecision, it chose leading Egyptian investment bank EFG Hermes as its financial advisor on the sale.

The government had planned to sell its shares of the company, which enjoys a monopoly until the year 2001, to a strategic foreign investor. But investors said unanimous rejection by the company's board of directors and strong parliamentary opposition have combined to stop the sale, at least for now.

Bringing in a financial advisor does not necessarily close the door to such a sale, but the Cabinet now appears open to other options.

The parliamentary committee has recommended selling equity to Arab investors, the private sector or company employees.

But a serious debate has emerged on whether a foreign strategic partner is needed for all sectors such as cement and electricity where technology is available and can be purchased, leaving the strategic partner with little to offer in areas of marketing and management.

Many Jordanians fear that privatisation will serve a vehicle for Israeli domination of the country's industrial sector after both countries signed the 1994 peace treaty.

They criticise investment legislation passed last year that removed most restrictions on foreign ownership of public share holding companies.

In a heated debate last month, the Lower House recommended tough restrictions on the government's privatisation strategy to calm popular fear that it could lead to foreigners holding major stakes in key industries. Forty-eight deputies in the 80-strong House asked the government in a petition not to sell successful state enterprises without consulting them.

Although the recommendations are not binding on the government, they could influence future decisions on major state divestitures.

"The vilification of the process has influenced official thinking," said one official. "Officials will be more reluctant to take bold action. No one likes to be accused of selling off their country to the highest bidder."

Foreign and local investors say the government's resolve will be tested in the coming months when it chooses between Britain's Cable and Wireless PLC and U.S.-based Southern Bell Corporation (SBC) for the 40 per cent stake in the JTC, the first large-scale sale.

The parliamentary committee expressed reservations about the size of the shares to be offered and who will run the day-to-day affairs of the company despite government assurances that it maintain control of the JTC board.

The government insists that teaming up with a strategic partner in the telecom sector will provide improved service for the customer through large investments and technology transfers. Defending its position, the government has said competition and efficiency would only bring prices down as the experience of many other countries has shown.

"There is no way you can keep up with the rapid pace of telecom if you wait for soft loans from foreign governments," said another official, answering critics who say that the government should not sell off its shares in profitable enterprises.

Some officials and economists say the real question facing Jordan is how successful is privatisation going to be.

They point to the fact that Jordan is located in a region still perceived as politically unstable and where its economic performance, despite its success over the last few years, has still not earned Jordan an investment grade rating. Investment banks remain sceptical over the attractiveness of opportunities offered by Jordan's privatisation.

The number of financial advisors and potential strategic partners who actually submitted bids for privatisation-related services has shown that interest in Jordan is not paramount at a time when many other regions in the world are offering more lucrative returns for investors.

To avoid dangers of failed peace process, Jordan pushes for movement on PNA-Israel track

By Alia A. Toukan
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Jordan, concerned by possible repercussions of the continued deadlock in the peace process, is trying to affirm its role as a regional peacemaker by pushing for movement on the Palestinian-Israeli track, officials and analysts say.

Reminiscent of its active involvement in the eleventh hour talks before reaching the Palestinian-Israeli Hebron accords early last year, Jordan has in the past month stepped up its diplomatic profile in ensuring that the peace process does not collapse.

The Kingdom has a vested interest in seeing the resumption of peace talks between the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) and Israel and the implementation of the second Israeli troop redeployment from the West Bank, after it has put itself out on a limb by sealing its 1994 peace treaty with the Jewish state.

Jordan, however, is walking a political tightrope in carving out a role for itself while simultaneously not posing a real or perceived threat to the PNA, analysts say.

The Kingdom's attempts at being accepted as a regional peace-broker is part and parcel of its concern that its interests be taken into consideration in any final deal between the Palestinians and Israelis.

Seeking a role as a peace-broker has always been a difficult task as it "evokes regional suspicions and rivalry," as one analyst concedes. Jordan's potential involvement in a final status deal, whether direct or indirect, has always raised misgivings in some Palestinian circles.

Jordan has officially said

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that it will not partake in any final status negotiations. "Jordan has to be considered in the outcome of several final status issues that affect its national security, but will not take part in the actual negotiations," a former senior official told the Jordan Times.

While the Kingdom seeks to ensure that its role in pushing the Palestinian-Israeli peace talks is sufficiently recognised both regionally and internationally, it must also constantly reassure the PNA that it has no political ambitions on the West Bank and in final status negotiations, and is not interested in politically weakening the Palestinians.

A case in point was His Majesty King Hussein's letter to Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali last week, in which the Monarch cited local media attempts at sabotaging Jordanian-PNA relations. The letter reiterated Jordan's full recognition of the PNA as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, and its whole hearted support for Palestinian national aspirations.

The letter came a day after a formal complaint was sent from Palestinian President Yasser Arafat to King Hussein, in which the Palestinian president cited Jordanian media reports, Hamas statements from Jordan, as well as official statements in relation to the PNA-Hamas dispute over the controversial death of Mohieddin Sharif, officials told the Jordan Times.

What particularly angered the Palestinians was what they saw as Jordan's refusal to support the PNA's version of who was responsible for Sharif's death late last month. Jordanian officials had said that the Kingdom would not interfere in internal Palestinian politics. In this context, King Hussein's letter was targeting the government as much as the local press.

The presence of a five-member Hamas office, which Jordan insists functions solely as a media outlet, has long been a sore point in relations with the PNA and Israel. During the latest internal Palestinian dispute, the PNA was angered by the fact that Jordan did not stop the Hamas office in Jordan from issuing statements.

"For Jordan to play a role in the peace process it needs to be on good terms with everyone, in particular the Palestinians and Israelis," one analyst says, as evidenced in the many Israeli visits to the Kingdom, and Jordanian attempts at coordination with the Palestinians and Egyptians. Others, however, contend that maintaining good relations with all the players in the arena is a mission impossible.

His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan's visit to Tel Aviv on March 10 was necessary to mend full ties with the Jewish state following the Mossad's failed attack on a Hamas leader in Amman last fall, prior to His Majesty's talks with U.S. President Bill Clinton in Washington later that month, officials say.

But considering the delaying tactics of Israeli Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu, Jordan's relations with Israel, although welcomed internationally and especially by the U.S., have increasingly become more of a liability than an asset both at home and in the region.

The Kingdom, home to approximately 1.8 million Palestinian refugees, has also been suffering acute economic hardships.

One of the basic premises of Jordan's peace treaty with the Jewish state was that there would be movement on the Palestinian-Israeli track, an assumption that has been shattered since Mr. Netanyahu came to power in May 1996.

The government is finding it increasingly difficult to convince the population of the merits of a peace process that is becoming more unpopular by the day.

"Either you give people emotional support or material benefits. But lately people have been denied both. The situation is so difficult now and we have very limited strategic options. If it wasn't for Jordanians' personal love for His Majesty, I dread to think what could happen," a seasoned politician recently told the Jordan Times.

Jordan is finding that it can no longer accept Israeli excuses for not implementing its agreements with the

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Crown Prince con

AMMAN (Petra) — His R... Prince Hassan, the Regent, of... Greek President Constantine S... ing him over the death of ex... Constantin Caramanlis, Caramanlis... hours of Thursday of heart failure... ral at the age of 91.

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By Fairouz Abu-Ghazaleh
Special to the Jordan Times

BADEN-BADEN — His Majesty King Hussein on Friday met with German Chancellor Helmut Kohl and discussed with him the European role in the stalled Mideast peace process, the suffering of the sanctions-stricken Iraqi people and bilateral relations between the two countries.

The King stressed Jordan's commitment to achieving a just and comprehensive peace in the region and helping the Palestinian brothers in securing their legitimate rights and establishing their own state on their national soil.

King Hussein emphasised Jordan's principled stand towards a just, comprehensive and durable peace in the region.

The King also called for a review of the sanctions imposed on the Iraqi people.

"It is time for seriously taking into consideration the sanctions being imposed on the Iraqi people for the past ten years," said the king.

Also during yesterday's meeting with Chancellor Kohl, the King expressed gratitude for Germany's annual assistance to the Kingdom's various sectors.

Chancellor Kohl voiced his appreciation to King Hussein's continued efforts for a better understanding among nations on the basis

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Combined agency dispatches

The U.N. Security Council on Friday agreed to hold an informal meeting with two Iraqi officials that could produce a new U.S.-Iraq encounter, Western diplomats said.

The 15 Council members agreed that Russia would host the meeting on Monday with Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammad Said Al Sahhaf and Oil Minister Mohammad Amer Al Rashid, Western diplomats said.

A U.S. diplomat said it was not known whether U.S. Ambassador Bill Richardson would attend the informal session.

Iraq complains that Washington has rebuffed Iraqi requests for direct contacts between U.S. and Iraqi officials.

Monday's meeting is due to review the council's six-months series of U.N. sanctions against Iraq in force since the August 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

A Special Commission (UNSCOM) of attempting to lift sanctions by adopting a "biggest approach" in reporting on Iraqi disarmament.

It a detailed rebuttal of UNSCOM chief Richard Butler's April 17 report. Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tareq Aziz reiterated that Iraq no longer held any weapons of mass destruction, and called on the U.N. Security Council to lift the 7-year old sanctions immediately.

Aziz also urged UNSCOM to present to the Security Council all available information about outstanding